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ABSTRACT

The information in this booklet is intended to help teachers improve writing instruction in grades seven through twelve. The topics discussed include (1) establishing a writing program in the elementary and secondary school grades; (2) guidelines for organizing writing programs; (3) assigning versus teaching; (4) establishing a writing workshop or laboratory; (5) analyzing students' writing problems, writing processes, and writing products; (6) evaluation of student papers; and (7) using the peer conferencing technique. Sample materials are provided for teaching letter writing, report writing, and persuasive writing. Activities and strategies are discussed for teaching rhetorical task, relation of parts to a unified whole, sentence structure, syntax, word choice, and mechanics. An outline delineates the basic skills in writing. A selected bibliography of recent writings on composition is also included. (RL)

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Helping Student Writers

Grades 7-12

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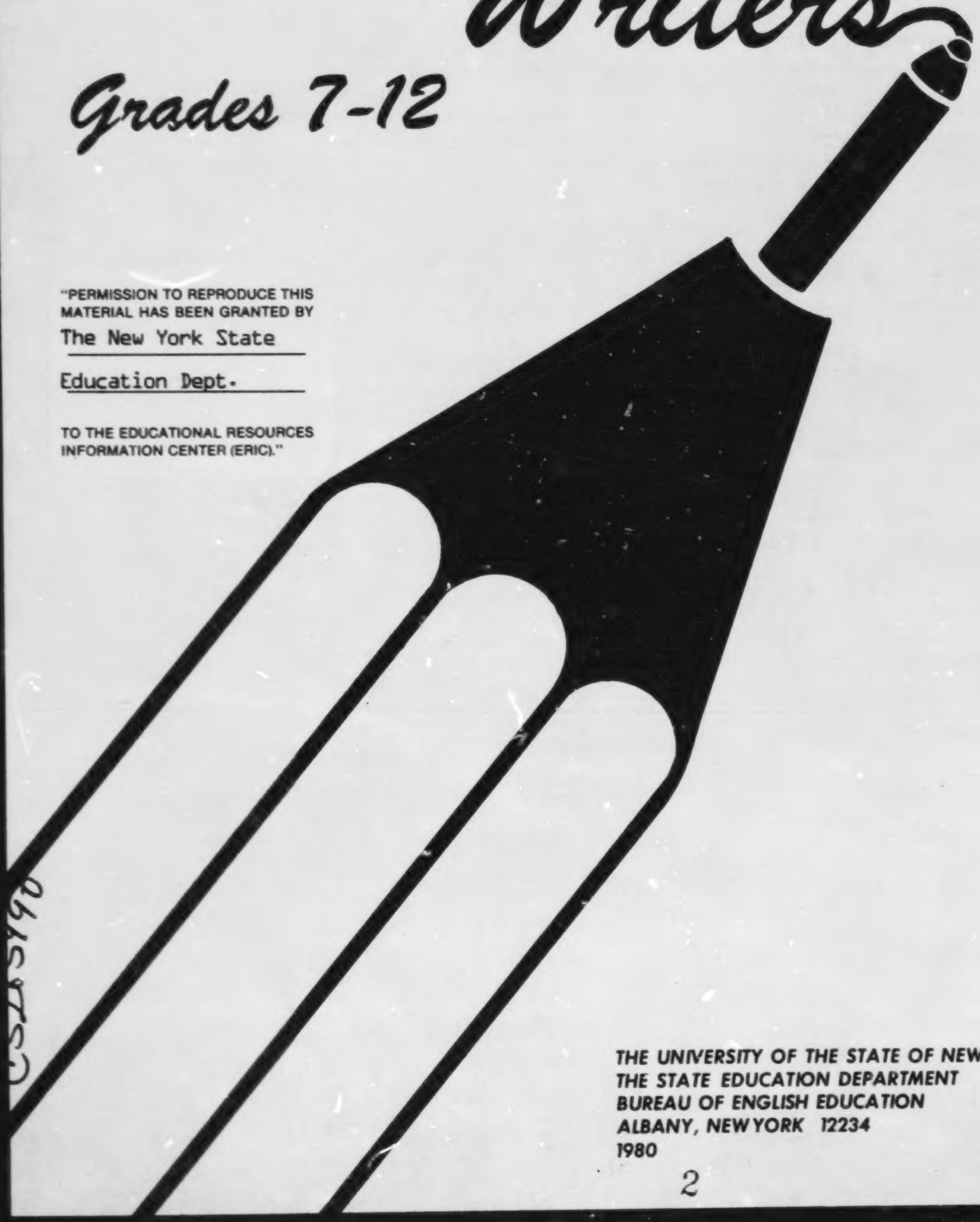

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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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ESTABLISHING A WRITING PROGRAM, K-12

In the Bureau of English Education, we endorse the "Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs," (National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois, March, 1979) a copy of which can be found on pages 6-7. Additional suggestions for establishing a writing program are also included below.

General

1. The program should be developed by a committee of teachers under the guidance of a coordinator who has knowledge of current theory and research in writing.

2. The program is based on the knowledge that writing is best taught through actual writing and not through filling in blanks, underlining parts of speech, or diagraming sentences.

3. The program is based on the understanding that usage, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics are best taught in connection with the actual writing done by pupils, not in isolation.

4. The program is based on the understanding that "To Assign Is Not to Teach." (Cecelia Kingston, Coordinator of English, Public Schools of the Tarrytowns - See pages 8-9 of this publication.)

5. The teaching of writing takes into account all aspects of the composing process: prewriting, writing, rewriting, editing.

6. The development of a soundly based writing program is accompanied by extensive inservice opportunities for teachers, in order to help them implement the program.

Elementary School

1. The development of oral language plays an important part in the development of skills in writing. Therefore, at all levels, children should be given opportunities to talk and something to talk about. Language development can be encouraged in kindergarten through first or second grade by allowing children to dictate stories to the teacher or to older children to transcribe. These stories can then be made the basis of reading lessons and can be made into classroom books. (See Lucy Calkins, "Children Write--And Their Writing Becomes Their Textbook," in Language Arts, 55:7, pp. 804-815.)

2. Teachers of children in elementary schools should keep in mind the findings of research that suggest " . . . students who first gain skill in writing in the expressive mode will develop the requisite skills for writing in the transactional and poetic modes more easily than will students who do not have the expressive base." (See Research in the Teaching of English, 12:4, pp. 349-350.) In other words, even if we were to teach directly for the Preliminary Competency Test in Writing given in the 8th or 9th grades, the best way to prepare students for this examination is to help them to write in many modes. Children should be taught to write personal narrations, accounts of feelings, and explanations of what they know, as well as the modes required on the test.

3. During the prewriting stage, children should be given the opportunity to prepare for writing by such things as drawing or painting, questioning and interviewing, and discussing plans.

During the writing stage, children should have the opportunity to get immediate feedback by reading each other's papers in the rough-draft stage. In addition, the teacher should intervene to help pupils during the writing stage when he or she observes signs of frustration or the need for a word that is not quite yet at the command of the child. The teacher may give immediate feedback during the writing stage by raising questions of meaning, asking for more details, or suggesting possible alternate solutions to a writing problem.

Rewriting is encouraged when the child is allowed to choose his or her best work for redrafting and inclusion in class books or displays.

4. Children can write in various ways even in the early grades, and teachers should give them every opportunity to write in all subjects. Teachers do not necessarily have to correct and assign grades to every piece of writing. Children can write such things as rules for an activity, records of the growth of plants or animals, a summary of what they learned from a field trip or a visit to the class by a guest, a calendar-diary, real letters and notes that are mailed, captions for art projects, scripts for a science or social studies broadcast.

5. One of the most important aspects of the writing program is keeping a writing folder for each child, with representative samples kept in the folder from grade to grade. Folders are also an excellent means of evaluating an individual child's progress as well as the entire writing program.

The folder is an important basis for pupil-teacher writing conferences. From time to time, the teacher should discuss the child's progress with her or him, emphasizing the progress already made as well as the progress needed. In addition, folders are also good evidence to parents and to the public that composition is indeed being taught, and being well taught.

6. Teachers should be aware of the curriculum in all the grades, not just in the ones they teach. In addition, there should be writing exchanges and oral presentations between grades within the school.

7. The principal of each school should form a writing committee and, with the committee, plan ways to help improve writing in all subject areas.

Secondary Schools

1. Teachers in the secondary schools should be aware of the writing program in the elementary schools. There should be frequent contact, particularly between the teachers of 6th and 7th grades or 5th and 6th grades, whichever the case may be, to discuss ways of developing writing skills, to exchange sets of papers, to analyze writing problems of individual pupils.

2. The writing program should seek to enhance the skills of all students.

3. As suggested for the grade schools, every possible occasion should be used to get students to write, and to vary the purposes and audiences for which they write. Again, not every piece of writing has to be corrected and graded.

4. Teachers must be conscious of the fact that having students do grammar and usage exercises, or write out answers to questions at the end of the chapter, is not the same thing as teaching students how to write.

5. Teachers should be aware of the objectives of the entire writing program, not just the segments which they teach.

6. Time must be given to teaching writing, with provision for all stages of the writing process. This most likely means that some part of what the present curriculum indicates "must be covered" has to be omitted.

7. Support must be given in many ways to teachers of writing, including reasonable class sizes and total pupil load, inservice training, and leadership from the administrators and coordinators.

8. Teachers in all disciplines should be aware of the goals of improving student writing and should require writing of standard quality wherever applicable in their disciplines.

9. As in the grade schools, and for the same reasons, a folder of compositions should be kept for each student.

Remedial Programs

1. Remedial programs should focus on the objective of improving student writing, not only on the objective of passing the RCT in Writing.

2 Remedial programs should follow the general guidelines for all programs.

3. Remedial programs should be taught by certified English teachers or, if a remedial program is in place in an elementary school, teachers with common branch certification. Writing components of Federal- or State-funded programs will not be approved by the Bureau of English Education unless teachers are properly certified.

4. For remedial programs, and especially those that are assisted with Federal and State funds, it is essential that writing folders be kept. Such a folder should contain the following for each student:

a) Samples of writing the student has done early in the program or for the PCT or RCT in writing.

b) Analyses of two or three of these samples. Recommended diagnostic instruments are in *New York State Preliminary Competency Test in Writing: Manual for Administrators and Teachers*, pp. 9-10, and in this publication, beginning on page 13. Sample analyses of student papers follow the instruments.

c) An indication from the teacher of which problems have been identified and what strategies will be used for remediation.

d) Samples of writing done toward the end of the program.

e) An assessment of the progress the pupil has made during the program.

Note: The writing samples and the analyses may serve as pretests and posttests.

5. Special attention should be paid to providing inservice help to those teachers who are working in remedial programs, whether they are providing remediation within the general curriculum, or providing remediation beyond that in the general curriculum. (See table below.)

Plans for Remediation Based on the
New York State Preliminary Competency Test in Writing, Form A

Score	Comment	Recommended Administrative Decisions
80 or above	Probably will pass the final Regents Competency Test	None mandated.
65 to 79	At and just above the State Reference Point	Emphasize writing in courses.
50 to 64	Just below the State Reference Point	Remediation within the general curriculum recommended.
49 or below	Far below the State Reference Point	Remediation beyond that in the general curriculum, including intense individualized remediation recommended.

6. Students whose scores fall between 50% and 64% on the Preliminary Competency Test in Writing.

a) It cannot be emphasized too strongly that remediation strategies should be based on the students' own pieces of writing and NOT on drills in unrelated materials. (See section on analyzing student writing, beginning p. 13.)

b) Students can be grouped within the regular English classroom for instruction and practice according to the particular problem they are working on at the moment. (See section on activities, beginning p. 45.)

c) Remediation should aim at developing both fluency and control in several modes of writing, not just those which appear on the Regents Competency Test. In fact, there may be students who need to develop more fluency and control in writing personal narratives before they try writing reports.

7. Students whose scores fall below 50% on the Preliminary Competency Test in Writing.

a) Some students may be so deficient in writing skills that it is a problem to get them to generate any writing at all. The deficiency may be a part of a whole complex of problems in self-concept and a general lack of success in academic subjects. A first step is to help such students see the importance of their own experiences and the importance of communicating those experiences.

b) Interviewing as a prewriting activity may be especially important for the poor writer. The type of interview suggested as a beginning may be teacher-student or student-student. An example might be an interview concerning an object the student has brought to class: "What's that?" "What kind?" "How did you get it?"

c) Encourage students to get something down and not worry about appearance and spelling in the first draft. This is not to say that all the conventions of standard written English are not important. When the student is convinced that he or she has something to say in writing and that it is possible for him or her to write it, then the rewriting, editing, and correcting (by the student, with help from the teacher or others) can begin.

d) Journal writing is an important mode for all students, but may be crucial as a means of getting nonwriters or poor writers started.

e) As often as possible, teachers of writing should write the assignments they give their students. With slower students especially, the teacher should write for at least five minutes of the class period in which the students write. It is helpful for the student to see that writing is a valued activity and that the teacher's first draft also contains cross-outs, insertions, corrections. In addition, by writing at least five minutes of an assignment, the teacher can more readily see possible problems that may arise from the assignment itself.

8. Donald Graves of the University of New Hampshire, an authority on the writing process of young children, feels that student self-diagnosis is important. For example, in their own first drafts students are told to circle all the words that they think might be misspelled or to use some sort of symbol in places where they are unsure of the punctuation. Knowing where the problems are is a step toward solving those problems. Also, such a procedure encourages students to reread their material and possibly note places where they can make corrections that they already know how to make. The procedure confers a sense of authority and voice on the student in relation to his or her own material.

GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING WRITING PROGRAMS

Both an operational definition of writing and strong program ingredients must be the bases for any efforts made to improve student writing within the school situation. Planners of writing programs must begin with an adequate conception of what writing is. In the NCTE statement, writing is described as ". . . the process of selecting, combining, arranging and developing ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and, often, longer units of discourse. The process requires the writer to cope with a number of variables: method of development (narrating, explaining, describing, reporting, and persuading); tone (from the very personal to quite formal); form (from a limerick to a formal letter to a long research report); purpose (from discovering and expressing personal feelings and values to conducting the impersonal 'business' of everyday life); possible audiences (oneself, classmates, a teacher, 'the world')." Improving one's writing ability involves developing increasing skill and sensitivity in selecting from and combining these variables to shape particular pieces of writing. It also involves learning to conform to the conventions of the printed language appropriate to the age of the writer and to the form, purpose, and tone of the pieces of writing.

Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs

Teaching and Learning

1. There is evidence that knowledge of current theory and research in writing has been sought and applied in developing the writing program.

2. Writing instruction is a substantial and clearly identified part of an integrated English language arts curriculum.

3. Writing is called for in other subject areas.

4. The subject matter of writing has its richest source in the students' personal, social, and academic interests and experiences.

5. Students write in many forms (e.g., essays, notes, summaries, poems, letters, stories, reports, scripts, journals).

6. Students write for a variety of audiences (e.g., self, classmates, the community, the teacher) to learn that approaches vary as audiences vary.

7. Students write for a wide range of purposes (e.g., to inform, to persuade, to express the self, to explore, to clarify thinking).

8. Class time is devoted to all aspects of the writing process: generating ideas, drafting, revising, and editing.

9. All students receive instruction both in developing and expressing ideas and in using the conventions of edited American English.

10. Control of the conventions of edited American English (supporting skills such as spelling, handwriting, punctuation, and grammatical usage) is developed primarily during the writing process and secondarily through related exercises.

11. Students receive constructive responses from the teacher and from others at various stages in the writing process.

12. Evaluation of individual writing growth:

(a) Is based on complete pieces of writing;
(b) Reflects informed judgments, first, about clarity and content and then about conventions of spelling, mechanics, and usage;
(c) Includes regular responses to individual pieces of student writing as well as periodic assessment measuring growth over a period of time.

Support

13. Teachers with major responsibility for writing instruction participate in continuing education programs reflecting current knowledge about the teaching of writing.

14. Teachers of other subjects receive information and training in ways to make use of and to respond to writing in their classes.

15. Parent and community groups are informed about the writing program and about ways in which they can support it.

16. School and class schedules provide sufficient time to assure that the writing process is thoroughly pursued.

17. Teachers and students have access to and make regular use of a wide range of resources (e.g., library services, media, teaching materials, duplicating facilities, supplies) for support of the writing program.

Program Evaluation

18. Evaluation of the writing program focuses on preprogram and postprogram sampling of complete pieces of writing, utilizing a recognized procedure to arrive at reliable judgments about the quality of the program.

19. Evaluation of the program might also include assessment of a sample of student attitudes, gathering of pertinent quantitative data (e.g., frequency of student writing, time devoted to writing activities), and observational data (evidence of prewriting activities, class anthologies, writing folders, and student writing displays).

ASSIGNING VS. TEACHING

Cecelia Kingston
Coordinator of English
Public Schools of the Tarrytowns

When writing is assigned	When writing is taught
1. Teacher asks students to write on one topic from a list of topics which may or may not be related to content of the course or experiences of the students.	1. Teacher encourages students to communicate their ideas precisely and effectively through writing.
2. Topic or question is usually general, rarely structured.	2. Topic or question is usually specific, often highly structured.
3. Topic allows for sloppy thinking, glittering generalities.	3. Topic forces precise thought, supporting details.
4. Audience for paper is rarely identified.	4. Audience for paper is specifically identified.
5. Purpose for writing assignment is nebulous or vague.	5. Purpose for writing assignment is specifically articulated.
6. Students assume they are writing for a grade.	6. Students know they are writing to improve their ability to express themselves precisely.
7. Students are often asked to write spontaneously.	7. Students are encouraged to think about their subjects.
8. Students are often given a time limit or a work limit or both.	8. Students are encouraged to judge the scope of the purpose in terms of the time available and the number of words it would take to fulfill this purpose.
9. Students are required to hand in the first draft for a grade.	9. Students are encouraged to review and revise the first draft.
10. Teacher comments on paper are usually negative, most often corrections of errors.	10. Teacher comments stress the positive and are constructive about the negative aspects.
11. Corrections are usually in reference to mechanical errors.	11. Recommendations for improvement in style, format and organization of thoughts are made.

When writing is assigned	When writing is taught
12. Usually every error is corrected on every page by the teacher.	12. Often only certain elements of composition - errors - are corrected for a specific assignment.
13. Most of the teacher's time is spent correcting papers.	13. Most of the teacher's time is spent in class teaching the writing skills.
14. The teacher corrects every paper.	14. The teacher encourages self-evaluation and group evaluation of most of the papers.
15. Students never quite know how teacher arrives at grades.	15. Students always know why they earn a grade.
16. All writing assignments tend to be essays - usually between 200-300 words.	16. Writing assignments vary in length according to purpose of the assignment.
17. Students are criticized for not making the purpose clear, for not organizing thoughts logically, for not developing ideas.	17. Students are taught how to limit purpose, organize thoughts, and develop ideas.
18. Students are not aware of significant improvement in their writing.	18. Students are aware of significant growth - or lack of growth - in specific areas.
19. Students are asked to analyze, compare, describe, define, review, trace, but are not taught how to organize their thoughts to succeed in their goals.	19. Students are given models of essays which analyze, or compare, etc., and/or they are guided into developing the format best suited for analysis, or comparison, etc.
20. Students are required to rewrite --in some cases. But rewriting usually only applies to corrections in grammar, usage, etc.	20. Students are encouraged to revise, to edit, to improve - and to correct first draft, then resubmit.
21. Students are required to write without much pre-thought.	21. Students are motivated into thinking about what they are to write.
22. Students rarely know what style means or what their own style is.	22. Students are taught to analyze their own style.
23. Students are assigned a number of different writing experiences: poem, play, book review, term paper.	23. Students are taught to handle a variety of writing forms.
24. Students and teacher are bored by what students write.	24. Students and teacher are excited about what students write.

C. Kingston

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ESTABLISHING A WRITING WORKSHOP OR LABORATORY

Workshop or Laboratory?

Once a district has decided to give students extra help in the form of a writing workshop or laboratory, the first decision to be made is a decision of philosophy. Should the extra help be given primarily in a writing workshop, in a writing laboratory, or in a combination of the two?

The distinction is an important one, for the concepts that govern what goes on in each are quite different. A writing workshop is primarily designed to generate more writing: students will write frequently, will try many different types of writing, and will develop each piece of writing more fully. Students will also develop a sense of writing for purpose and audience, will learn to organize more effectively, and will learn to support generalizations with reasons, details and examples.

A writing workshop will take the composing process into account by providing prewriting as well as writing activities. Extensive use will be made of discussions, small group work, and individual student-teacher conferences. There will be little use of the traditional grammar and usage exercises; instead, there will be practice in combining, expanding, reformulating and revising sentences from the students' own writing.

A writing laboratory, on the other hand, is mainly concerned with the postwriting stage: editing and correcting errors.

Both workshops and laboratories are important in improving student writing, but the correction of error without specific instruction and teacher intervention in the prewriting and writing stages will not in itself effect great improvement in student writing.

The same teacher and the same space and time period could be used for both the workshop and the laboratory. For example, if 40 minutes three times a week were devoted to writing improvement, two of the periods could be workshops and the third, the laboratory. The separation of functions helps both teachers and students realize that all stages of the writing process need attention, not just the postwriting correction of errors.

Space and Time

Ideally, a permanent space would be set aside for a writing workshop, a space that accommodates 8-10 students comfortably, has storage space for file cabinets, card files, dictionaries, and the like. Some schools have developed a "moveable workshop" on a cart. The cart with various materials developed or collected for use in writing activities is taken to the classroom.

It is assumed that students would be scheduled for the workshop for a specific amount of time each week. Some schools, however, may wish to use the nonscheduled approach for students who want help with particular assignments or who want to work for a certain amount of time to improve a particular subskill. Usually, though, those most in need of help do not "drop in."

The workshop approach can be used within the regular class period by setting up space and materials and by working with small groups.

The number of times a week and the number of minutes per period cannot be exactly prescribed, nor can the number of weeks the student should be scheduled for the writing workshop or laboratory. If the student is there chiefly to acquire the skills necessary to pass the Regents Competency Test in Writing, passing a teacher-devised test similar to the competency test could indicate a satisfactory level of achievement. Probably an even better determination of whether the student is ready to leave the workshop situation could be made by analyzing the materials in the student's writing folder. The teacher should be able to determine through such analysis whether the student will profit enough from regular classroom instruction to become a reasonably proficient writer. If a student is in a workshop or laboratory to improve a particular subskill, such as organization, the student would leave the writing laboratory when he or she had become proficient in that skill.

Staffing

The staff should consist of English teachers who are able to apply to the program knowledge of current theory and research in writing. It may well be that the school district will have to provide inservice work for teachers and time for the choosing and developing of activities.

The teachers chosen to work in the writing workshop or laboratory should be able to analyze both the writing process and the written work of students in order to give the most effective help. (See pp. 9-23 of New York State Preliminary Competency Test in Writing: Manual for Administrators and Teachers for sample instruments and analyses.)

The staff should consist of teachers who believe that, with the proper encouragement and help, students can, indeed, improve their writing skills. If they are not the same teachers who have the students in the regular classes, they should cooperate with the regular English or language arts teachers to help insure that the students get the specific help they need. They also should be able to help other subject area teachers plan activities which will enhance writing skills.

Materials

It is not necessary for the school districts to buy new texts and expensive materials or machines for a writing workshop or laboratory. Most of the essentials already exist in the schools. Such things as dictionaries and a few references for usage and style should be available. Card files of various activities for teaching writing can be developed, and pictures and posters for use in stimulating writing activities can be assembled over a period of time. A file cabinet for keeping student folders and records would be helpful.

Record Keeping

The type of record keeping for the workshop or laboratory will depend, of course, on whether it is a nonscheduled lab, a regularly scheduled workshop for a semester or so, or time set aside during the regular class period. Certainly there should be a record of why the students are there: failure to pass the PCT in Writing, teacher referral, self-referral. As is usually recommended for regular English and language arts classes, a folder of each student's writing and an individual profile sheet should be kept. (A sample profile sheet is on page 25 of the manual mentioned below.) A record also should be kept of the evaluation of student improvement. Some record form also should be devised to indicate the attendance record of the student and the numbers and types of writing tasks that have been prescribed and completed. (See page 6 of New York State Preliminary Competency Test in Writing: Manual for Administrators and Teachers for further information on record keeping.)

Evaluation

Many schools are using the PCT's in Writing as pretests for eighth and ninth grade students. No reliable diagnostic test or pretest now exists for students in earlier grades. The pretest procedure at the present time would be evaluations and analyses of students' writing samples.

An evaluation and analysis of student papers at the end of the workshop or laboratory experience could serve as the posttest. The same type of criteria should be used for both pretesting and posttesting.

The writing workshop or laboratory itself should be evaluated in various ways: for example, by observation by a supervisor or administrator, by the numbers of students who showed improvement, by use of student questionnaires or rating.

Materials and activities should constantly be evaluated, adapted, and updated in light of student progress.

ANALYZING THE STUDENT'S WRITING PROBLEMS

There are two types of diagnoses of student writing problems: a diagnosis of the process the student goes through as he or she writes, and a diagnosis of the papers written by the student. The teacher will want to observe the student and to interview the student about his or her process of writing, and also to look at writing samples such as the tasks on the Preliminary Competency Test (PCT) in Writing.

In order to help the student, the most important part of the diagnosis is to decide what kind of problem the student has. For example, if, on the report task of the PCT in Writing, the details are not rearranged in a logical order, the student may need practice in categorizing and grouping details and practice in subordination. If the task is misunderstood in some way so that the student writes a personal narrative or an unrelated anecdote suggested by one detail of the list of details, the student may need practice in analyzing a task.

Student's Writing History

It is the purpose of an interview to gather information about the student's background and experience in writing in order to help the teacher take the student from where he or she is now to the next point in his or her development -- thus the teacher acts as a collaborator. The teacher should be available to the student at all stages of the writing process as coach, friend, adviser. The student should feel free to come to the teacher for help at any point. Teachers are used to responding to the end product, usually to the proofreading aspect. They should also intervene at various stages in the process.

The teacher should keep certain points in mind:

1. The teacher should interview the student and also observe the student in a normal classroom situation.

2. The teacher should help the student to find the techniques that work best to gain control over his or her writing. The teacher should be alert to the signs of frustration that indicate that the student cannot control his or her writing any longer.

Some questions which might be asked by the teacher about the student's writing:

1. How much writing has the student done?

2. What kinds of writing has the student done?

3. How does the student feel about writing? Is there any type of writing preferred?

4. How much experience has the student had with writing for different audiences?

5. Are there enormous discrepancies between the student's oral and writing abilities? How well does the student manage in reading his or her own writing?

ANALYZING THE STUDENT'S WRITING PROCESS

At any stage in the writing process, the writer may return to an earlier stage.

Prewriting

1. Does the student analyze the key elements of a task?
2. How much time does the student spend inventing and incubating ideas? Does he or she brainstorm and jot down ideas? Talk the ideas out with peers?
3. How much time does he or she spend planning? Does the student organize or "jump in"?

Writing

1. Does the student draft by the sentence, the paragraph, or the whole piece of writing? In other words, does the student make a practice of going back over each sentence as he or she writes, or each paragraph, or not until the end of the piece? (Or does he or she go back over it at all?)
2. What are the major breaks (pauses) in the writing process? Does the student look backward or forward? Is the student thinking and rereading or is he or she showing signs of frustration? (This information indicates points of teacher intervention in the process to aid the student. Tell the student, for example, that if he or she is pausing because of frustration, the teacher or peers might be able to help.)
3. Can the student stay with each thought in the line of his or her discussion long enough to develop it?

Postwriting

1. Does the student edit: add, subtract, change around?
2. Does the student proofread?

* * *

While the product can be evaluated and inferences about the successful use of the process can be drawn, there is no doubt that teacher intervention at various stages of the writing process is more effective than dealing solely with the product. If there is something wrong with the product, change the process!

ANALYZING THE STUDENT'S WRITING PRODUCT

Rhetorical Task

1. Does the student understand the directions?
2. Does the student recognize the rhetorical aim, for example, to report, to request, to persuade?
3. Does the student use the conventions of the mode, such as letter or report, in which the student is writing?
4. Does the student have a consistent point of view?
5. Does the student demonstrate a sense of audience?

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Relation of parts to a unified whole: perception of elements needed to develop major sections:

1. Does the student demonstrate a general plan of organization or logical sequencing?
2. Does the student support generalization with appropriate reasons, details, examples?
3. Does the student include the appropriate level of generalization (abstraction) and exclude irrelevant detail?
4. Does the student demonstrate coherence through the use of judicious repetition of key words, control of pronoun reference, as well as maintain logical tense and mood?

Sentence Structure/Syntax

1. Does the student demonstrate an awareness of the options available to vary sentence structure? (To fully answer this question, several samples of the student's writing are required.)
2. Is the sentence structure free of errors? (e.g. unintentional fragments, comma splices, inflectional errors)
3. Are all the sentences short and choppy, or are they long and stringy with coordinate conjunctions?

Word Choice

1. Does the student use vague language instead of clear, concrete language?
2. Does the student use words inaccurately or form them incorrectly?
3. Does the student use a phrase or clause where a single word would be more appropriate?
4. Does the student use a mixture of levels of usage? (formal, informal, slang)
5. Does the student's repetition of words and phrases indicate a poverty of vocabulary?

Mechanics

1. Are there spelling problems? Are these problems from writing under pressure, lack of proofreading, or lack of knowledge? (A clue to the answer may be in noting whether the word in question is spelled correctly in another place in the paper.)
2. Are there punctuation and capitalization problems?
3. Is the handwriting neat and legible? (Penmanship can be a clue to problems students have in the composing process.)

Student ______________________ Class ______________

Teacher ______________________ Date ______________

Analyzing a Student's Writing Product

Yes/No

RHETORICAL TASK

___ ___ 1. Does the student understand the directions?

___ ___ 2. Does the student recognize the rhetorical aim - for example, to report, to request, to persuade?

___ ___ 3. Does the student use the conventions of the mode (letter, report) in which the student is writing?

___ ___ 4. Does the student have a consistent point of view?

___ ___ 5. Does the student demonstrate a sense of audience?

RELATION OF PARTS TO A UNIFIED WHOLE

___ ___ 1. Does the student demonstrate a general plan of organization or logical sequencing?

___ ___ 2. Does the student support generalization with appropriate reasons, details, examples?

___ ___ 3. Does the student include the appropriate level of generalization (abstraction) and exclude irrelevant detail?

___ ___ 4. Does the student demonstrate coherence through the use of judicious repetition of key words, control of pronoun reference, as well as maintain logical tense and mood?

SENTENCE STRUCTURE/SYNTAX

___ ___ 1. Does the student demonstrate an awareness of the options available to vary sentence structure? (To fully answer this question, several samples of the student's writing are required.)

___ ___ 2. Is the sentence structure free of errors? (e.g., unintentional fragments, comma splices, inflectional errors)

___ ___ 3. Are all the sentences short and choppy, or are they long and stringy with coordinate conjunctions?

WORD CHOICE

___ ___ 1. Does the student use clear, concrete language?

___ ___ 2. Does the student use words accurately and form them correctly?

___ ___ 3. Does the student use a single, specific word instead of clumsy phrases or clauses?

___ ___ 4. Does the student demonstrate appropriate level of usage? (formal, informal, slang)

___ ___ 5. Does the student avoid unnecessary repetition of words and phrases which would indicate a limited vocabulary?

MECHANICS

___ ___ 1. Does the student spell correctly?

___ ___ 2. Does the student use appropriate punctuation?

___ ___ 3. Does the student use correct capitalization?

___ ___ 4. Is the handwriting neat and legible?

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWERS

Letter #1

L.J. Blackwoo
P.O. Box 551
Dept. T2
Sherman MA 02158

[redacted]
36 Arena Streee
Bing Ham Ton New York 13903
MAY 8, 1978

Dear Sir,

I would Like a ~~me~~ Light Blue ~~T~~ T-shirt For A Lady. She Is Not Very Big BuT she will Take A Medium just so she can have for a ~~[illegible]~~ long Time the way she can grow in To. If it is not To mutch of a hassel ~~of~~ I will take one light blue T-shirt To I will Also Take A medium. Thank You For ~~your~~ quonnation it has Been Nice doing bisnest ~~a~~ rest with You.

5.95
5.95
11.90
1.10 Tx
13.00

enclosed
13.00

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWER

BUSINESS LETTER #1

Rhetorical Task

Comments

The student has an accurate perception of the task, but has not isolated the pertinent details. Student does not indicate in the body of the letter that a check is enclosed for correct amount.

Suggestions

Have student practice task analysis and assignments orally.

Have student list details to include in letter.

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Comments

The student is confused about business letter form: note placement of heading and inside address; lack of complimentary close and signature.

The student lacks logical sequencing of information because of inclusion of irrelevant material.

Suggestions

Have student practice business letter form by clipping advertisements for free pamphlets and brochures and then sending for those that might interest him or her.

Have student unscramble a list of sentences to arrive at a logical arrangement.

Require student to proofread the first draft and to draw lines through all information that does not relate to the task.

Sentence Structure/Syntax

Comments

Missing words and punctuation show that the student writer does not proofread or catch errors in his or her own writing. The student's run-on sentences seem to be caused by incorrect punctuation.

Suggestions

Pair students to read their letters to partners. Often, reading aloud causes students to "see" missing words or punctuation.

Have students read composition aloud and insert commas and periods orally.

Mechanics: Spelling

Comment

The student uses words which he or she cannot spell correctly ("meaden" for "medium," "mutch" for "much," "hasel" for "hassle," "quaperation" for "cooperation").

Suggestions

Pair students to drill on problem words from their own writing.

Have each student compile his or her own spelling dictionary, selected from the student's own writing.

Have students work on letter formation so that words do not appear misspelled because of being illegible.

Analyze spelling errors according to Mina Shaughnessy's system (see p. 8 of New York State Preliminary Competency Test in Writing: Manual for Administrators and Teachers).

Teach students to proofread first draft and to edit the final draft.

Letter #2

L. J Black & Co.,
P.O. Box 551, Dept. T2,
Sherman MA 02158

1315 Dodley A.de
utica N.Y 13301
5/15/79/

Dear sir:

I would like to ordor a light Blue T-Shirt For my Brother size M, men I am sending a money ordor of 6.50 Plus Postage and Handing. plase send to the address above

your Turly

[redacted]

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWER
BUSINESS LETTER #2

Rhetorical Task

Comments

The student understands that he or she must write a business letter, although he or she is somewhat confused about proper form.

The student understands that the item is to be ordered for someone else.

The student mentions that a money order is enclosed and states the amount, although he or she is confused by the difference between "plus postage and handling" and "including postage and handling."

The student could have received the merchandise ordered.

Suggestions

Duplicate a brief business letter. Cut apart the heading, inside address, salutation, etc. Put the pieces in an envelope. Have the student assemble and paste up the letter correctly.

Clip newspaper/magazine ads to which the student can respond by ordering free merchandise. Have format available to student at all times via model in his or her folder and wall chart.

Clip newspaper/magazine ads which require a sum of money be sent. Have the student orally explain the amount of money required when the ad states "plus postage and handling" and when it states "including postage and handling."

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Comment

Insufficient data

Suggestion

Look at several samples of student's writing.

Sentence Structure/Syntax

Comments

The student omitted a period at the end of the first sentence, inserted it at the end of the second sentence and omitted it at the end of the third. The third sentence is actually a fragment. With the addition of the word it, this would be a complete sentence. The question arises as to whether such errors can be attributed to lack of editing skills or carelessness. The student basically seems to have the idea of the structure of a complete sentence. However, this text is too limited for forming an opinion.

Suggestions

Ask the student to read the text aloud to teacher, stopping when the student feels he or she has come to the end of a sentence. Ask the student to put the end punctuation where he or she feels the sentence ends. Have the student work with a partner, each one reading the other's writing aloud and working out problems caused by lack of proper punctuation.

(See also note under "Mechanics" for other use of student's reading aloud.)

Mechanics

Comments

Spelling problems are evident, and may be attributed to several possible causes. The word "ordor" is misspelled twice, and the student apparently was unaware that the word "ordering" appeared in the text and could have been used as a clue. The same is true of the word "handing," which could have been clued from the text. "Ordor" is apparently a phonetic misspelling. "Handing" may be a proofreading error, or may be the result of a pronunciation error. The lack of "s" on "your" in the closing may be the result of a pronunciation error, lack of knowledge of the convention, poor proofreading, or unfamiliarity. The reversal of letters in "turly" may be the result of the student's unfamiliarity with the "look" of the written word. The student may simply not "see" what he or she has written. Omission of the "e" in "plase" may be due to the same cause.

Punctuation problems result from the student's apparent unfamiliarity with letter conventions. The comma is missing between city and state in both heading and inside address, and also after the closing. The lack of end punctuation was mentioned earlier.

The student seems to use capital letters arbitrarily. This is most probably due to handwriting habits. The student favors printing rather than cursive writing, and may not be aware that he or she is using capitals and lowercase interchangeably.

The penmanship is legible.

Suggestions

Spelling:

Help the student to observe himself or herself as a speller; i.e., to catalog and "narrow down" the types of errors made. Show the student how to enter each word in a list which shows the correct spelling, the incorrect spelling written by the student, and the nature of the spelling error. For example:

Word	Misspelling	Error	Explanation
order	ordor	er/or	letter substituted
handling	handing	l	letter omitted
truly	turly	ru/ur	letters reversed

After the student has cataloged about 20 words, help the student to discern any patterns that emerge.

1. If a spelling rule can be applied, show the student how to apply it.
2. If the student misspells due to pronunciation problems, help the student to hear correct pronunciation by dictating a short passage that incorporates the words.
3. If the student seems to have difficulty "seeing" written words accurately, the teacher should indicate at the end of a paper the number of words misspelled and hints about the types of errors. The student would then try to find and correct the errors.

(Adapted from Mina Shaughnessy, Errors and Expectations)

Punctuation:

The missing commas in this piece of writing are those commas which are part of the letter-writing convention. The student may be given a model letter with the appropriate punctuation indicated in red. Each time the student writes a letter, the model should be consulted. (The commas at the end of each line of the inside address are a carryover from the text and should be pointed out as such.)

Help the student become aware of the inappropriate use of capital letters. Have him or her read the text aloud and identify which letters should be capitals by underlining them. (The student may be unaware that he or she is using so many capital letters.) Then ask the student to explain when a capital letter is necessary.

Have the student read his or her letter aloud. Note whether the student "reads" words which are omitted. If this is the case, have the student work with a peer who reads his or her writing aloud word by word so the student can be made aware of the need for careful proofreading.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING LETTER WRITING

1. Keep posters of one or more acceptable business letter forms on view. As often as possible, have students write real letters in connection with class work, sending for free materials, asking for information, and the like. Have students check rough drafts with the poster before writing and mailing the finished letter.

2. Have students write real letters to sports figures, movie stars, Ann Landers, etc.

3. Keep a collection of mail-order catalogues in your classroom. Have students use the catalogues to select and order items, using correct business letter form. After collecting the order letters, redistribute them on another day. Each student now becomes the firm and must write a reply letter to explain that the item is out of stock. Use correct business letter form. (To increase level of difficulty, have student "firm" use the original catalogue to suggest an alternate item.) On another day, have students write a letter of complaint to the firm because the item they ordered has not yet arrived.

4. To help students who appear not to understand the difference, clip newspaper/magazine ads which require a sum of money be sent. Have the student orally explain the amount of money required when the ad states "plus postage and handling" and when it states "including postage and handling."

5. Divide students into groups. Have each group design letterheads for a different fictitious company. (Provide samples from real companies.) Have each group transfer the design on a ditto master and run off a few sheets of each ditto. Have each group write business letters to other groups - orders, complaints, inquiries, etc. Each letter must receive one appropriate reply.

6. Instruct students to select a "Help Wanted" ad from the newspaper and from the information given to write a letter of application for the job. As a variation of the idea, from the information given in the "Help Wanted" ad, have the student list details which describe the job, and in another list record the qualifications required for the job. Have the student use these two lists to write a report describing the job and the qualifications needed for the job. Share the report with the class. Compare the report with the original ad to determine whether all necessary information was included.

4/10/73

Part II

Social Studies Report on Henry Fuller

When I iterviewed him he told me he enjoyed the ancient temples and the sites.

He rode or a camel once. and the temperature reached 100°F.

He climbed the largest pyramid and hes willing to show movies to the class.

Their are problems of traveling but many different ways to travel their are many historical places and once he sailed up the nile in a sailboat.

Lenght of trip is 3 weeks.

He gets up at 5AM. to escape heat back to hotel by 10:AM..

King tut tomb was very exciting to see air travel from Cairo to Abu simbel.

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWER

REPORT #1

Rhetorical Task

Comments

Student understands that in order to write the report, Mr. Fuller must be interviewed; however, the point of view of reporting the interview is not maintained. Student does not keep his or her audience in mind.

Suggestions

Have the student write the report for one audience such as the social studies class. Then have the student change the audience, perhaps writing a report for the school newspaper. Writing for a specific audience influences the word choice, tone, choice of example, and even method of organization.

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Comments

Student is not able to organize the information given by grouping details under generalizations, but merely goes down the list of details as presented in the question. The student soon loses any control of the material.

Suggestions

Give student practice in organization; e.g., number the items in order of intended use in the report, or select main topics and the supporting details, or arrange the items by a timeline - first, second, third.

Have student work with devising categories; e.g., using objects within the classroom, the student should classify the objects under different categories such as color, shape, size and function. Have student write a paragraph for each category, justifying the classification of objects in that category.

Use pictures. Have student list and organize the details of the picture. Show student how different types of organization using the same picture are necessary for different purposes; for example, simple description, cause and effect, narration.

Have student choose one purpose and write the report. Have student rewrite the composition for a different purpose.

Word Choice

Comment

The student's words are limited to those used in the question, which may indicate a vocabulary problem.

Suggestion

Many samples of the student's writing should be examined to determine what specific word choice problems prevail.

Sentence Structure/Syntax

Comment

There is one run-on sentence, one fragment, and a final garbled sentence. There is little variation in sentence structure.

Suggestions

Use sentence combining exercises.

Have student imitate a variety of sentence patterns.

Devise exercises in sentence combining from student's own writing.

Mechanics

Comments

Spelling errors are limited to the homophone "their" for "there", and to "lenght" for "length." Capitalization errors occur in "nile" and "tut", even though these are correctly capitalized in the question. There is a punctuation error in "King Tut's tomb." These errors may be due to a lack of revision and proofreading.

Suggestions

Encourage students to help each other revise, edit, and proofread.

Have student read the paper aloud. This will encourage closer attention to the paper for proofreading.

Pair students with spelling problems and have them drill one another. Include homophones in drill.

Mr. Fuller went by air Travel From Cairo to Abu simbel he only had 3 week in July to stay so he wanted to see all that he could see there. there is so many interesting historical places To go he said The Frist Places I went was To see King Tut tomb it was so Exciting To see it. he told me. also he said They had so many Different ways to travel. But unfortahuley They had so many problems of traveling there in The summer Time Because of the heat. he told me that one day The temparature reached 100°F it must have Been so hot that day he Rode a camel once and then he rode in a sailboat on the Nile one day. he got up at 3a.m. To escape The heat of the day and went Back to his hotel by 10 a.m. he said he climed The largest pyramid. But he said he enjoyed ancient temple The Best. It is Time to go Back Home. when he Got There he was willing to show movies of The trip to the social studies classes and he did.

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWER

REPORT #2

Rhetorical Task

Comments

The student understands that the task is to write a report.

The student maintains a consistent point of view until the end.

The student maintains a sense of audience until the end.

Suggestions

Since the student seems to have a good idea of what is expected of him or her, the sudden shift at the end might be due to a sense of inadequacy as to how to end the report. This can be dealt with in the instruction on organization. (See Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole -Suggestions.)

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Comments

The student has attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to re-order the data. A plan of organization is lacking, as is the pupil's ability to distinguish between a head topic and a subtopic, the student treating them alike.

No paragraphing is evident because student has no plan and sees no relationships.

The student needs to develop the ability to see similarities and differences and to generalize.

Suggestions

Provide the student with a shoebox in which there is an assortment of objects. Have the student group the objects according to similar characteristics and orally explain basis. Have the student select one type of organization and write an introductory sentence explaining the nature of the organization. Then the student writes one sentence for each object which relates that object to the category.

Provide the student with a set of pictures (animals, cars, planes, clothing, furniture, etc.) Have student group items according to common factors. For each factor, the student writes a sentence stating the factor in common, then lists the appropriate objects under the topic sentence in an outline form. Student then writes one or more paragraphs following the outline, relating the objects to the topic sentence.

Student works with a peer. Each student is given a picture and lists as many details as possible, not in any special order. Students exchange lists and organize partner's details into categories. Students then try to write a description of the partner's picture based on the details and a topic sentence he or she has written describing each category. The number of paragraphs would be based on the students' ability level.

Word Choice

Comments

The student confines himself or herself fairly closely to the language of the exercise, but does add comments of his or her own.

The tone and word choice are suitable to this type of report.

There is a shift from "he" to "they" in two sentences. This is probably due to the student thinking of the generalized "they" rather than not understanding the subject.

Suggestions

Have the student identify who "they" are more specifically. Help the student recognize how the shift to "they" makes the meaning vague and unclear. Prepare a short passage with confused pronoun references and have the student rewrite it so that every reference is made clear.

Sentence Structure/Syntax

Comments

The student generally writes complete thoughts but neglects end punctuation, thus giving the impression of a string of run-on sentences. Each phrase in the test was actually turned into a complete thought, however.

There is variety in the sentence structure, with the student even adding one direct quotation and one indirect quotation. The student also uses compound sentences and complex sentences.

Suggestions

Have student read his or her work aloud, pausing to indicate the end of each sentence. Then have the student insert end punctuation where needed.

Provide the student with a short passage that lacks end punctuation and initial capitals. Have the student insert missing punctuation and capitals.

Mechanics

Comments

Capitalization is erratic and seems to be due to the fact that the student prints rather than uses cursive writing. (a) Words beginning with "b" and "e" are always capitalized. (b) The word "rode" is written once with a capital letter and once with a small letter. (c) Capital letters appear in the middle of a world ("EnJoyed"). (d) Student does not begin each sentence with a capital because he or she has not marked the end of the previous sentence.

End punctuation is generally omitted. The student uses only one comma, and that one incorrectly. Although the student uses a direct quotation, the quotation marks are omitted.

The student does not know the standard way for writing temperature and did not take advantage of its presence in the text to copy it. (100°F)

There is one error in agreement "there is so many interesting historical places . . ."

Spelling - (a) "3 week in July" is most likely a proofreading error since other plural words are properly written. (B) "temparature" is probably a copying error, since the word appears in the test. (c) "Climed" and "unfortchuley" are probably attempts to spell phonetically. (d) "frist" is a common reversal error.

Suggestions

Have student prepare a chart of capital and lower case letters to make sure that student knows the difference between them. Also have a wall chart available. Insist on capitals for the beginning of a sentence, the word "I," and for proper nouns. While the pupil is revising his or her papers, have the pupil's own letter chart available for reference.

Have student read his or her paper aloud, pausing where he or she thinks each sentence ends. At that point the student says "Period" or "Question Mark." Have student work with a partner so that the partner can point out and discuss necessary end punctuation. Show the student a brief passage with dialogue in quotation marks. Explain their location and use. Have the student write a brief dialogue between two individuals, two animals, a shoe which is being tried on and the foot it is trying to fit, etc.

Encourage student to copy passages as carefully as he or she can. Include a few nonsense sentences and/or poems so that the student must exert extra attention.

The error in agreement probably resulted from the use of the expletive "there." Give the student a series of pictures showing single and multiple objects. Have the student orally state "There (is, are) . . ." about each. Have the student write a brief paragraph about one of the pictures using at least two sentences beginning with "There."

Actual spelling errors on this paper can probably be reduced to two words: "climed" and "unfortchuley." The others could be corrected through careful proofreading and careful copying from the text. The misspelled words should be added to the student's own list. In the case of "climed," analogy can be made to other words ending in silent "b." The student should be given a brief dictation using the misspelled words after he or she has studied them.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING REPORT WRITING

1. For those students who have difficulty visualizing the relationship of parts to the whole, the following schema might be useful.

Report

1. What is the topic of this report? ____________________
2. For whom is this report intended? ____________________
3. What is the purpose of this report? ____________________
4. What is one main idea of this report? ____________________
5. List any details that relate to this specific idea. ____________________
6. What is another main idea of this report? ____________________
7. List any details that relate to this specific idea. ____________________
8. Based on the information in this report, what conclusion can be reached?

____

2. Put each fact in a series of facts on a file card. Ask students to arrange (organize) the facts physically by main ideas and details. After checking the organization, ask students to write the report. Over a period of time, several packs of cards with different information could be accumulated and students assigned to work with them on an individual basis. This activity is also suitable for science and social studies classes, or any class in which report writing is appropriate.

3. Divide the class into groups. Each group is to plan a different consumer report, for example, comparing the various types of hamburgers available in the area, or french fries, malts, ice cream cones, sundaes. Give each group a printed consumer report as a model. Have each group plan how to gather and organize the information. Discuss the various ideas for gathering and organizing. The students can then go on to actually gather the information and write the reports, making a consumer booklet.

4. Ask the students to pretend to be a detective who must make a report to the chief about a "missing person." The student is provided with a picture of the individual who is "missing." The student must observe the picture carefully and then list all the details possible. The details should then be grouped into categories and a plan of organization developed. Finally, the student writes the report to the chief and includes all the relevant information which has been compiled.

5. Ask the student to pretend to be a building inspector. He or she must write a report about unusual buildings or structures which have been visited. The "inspector" may select a structure from a story, real experience, or imagination and then write a report to his or her "boss" about the unusual building.

   Examples: the gingerbread house in Hansel and Gretel
   the three houses in the The Three Little Pigs
   the dwelling of the The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe
   Tarzan's tree house
   a real building on which the student has done research

   It may be possible to get from a city office the form that a real inspector uses.

6. Prepare a box of objects which might conceivably be in a spy's pockets: a few foreign coins, a bit of tape from a miniature tape recorder, a bit of exposed film, as well as some mundane items such as matches, button, etc. Tell the students, "A spy has been captured, but refuses to talk. However, the contents of his (or her) pockets are in this box. What deductions can you, as counterspies, make from these objects?" Have students jot down their deductions and then write a report to their spy master.

7. Collect travel brochures describing various vacation or tourist areas. Have students read several brochures about a selected place; have them make a list of details about the location and the attractions. Have students use the list to write reports about their selected places which they will read to their classmates. Letter writing could be combined with this activity by having students write to the Chamber of Commerce requesting information about other attractions in the same area. Persuasive writing could be combined with this activity by having students write to friends to persuade them to go to the same place for a vacation.

Subject [illegible] writing School

Date april 25, 1979 Name [redacted]

Reviewed by Per Cent

Persuasion #1

Part III

Reasons why school life should be more casual

Dear principle.

Should be able to go out side durring classes. 1. to get a change of scenery fresh air, 2. Enjoy the out doors, get sunshine, and to get more freedom, not being stuck in the building all day long. It will improve school life because youre out side and not inside wich in this case makes a diffrents. your stuck inside all day pretty soon the room gets Stuffy, and then ya go out side to get fresh air and it feels kind of nice to get out side after youve been in all day. and it would be good for the students to.

I, now at the close of the examination in .... declare that prior to this examination I had no knowledge of what questions were to be proposed, and have neither given nor received explanation or other aid in answering any of them.

Signed

36

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWER

PERSUASION #1

Rhetorical Task

Comments

The student understands that the writing task is to state one way to improve school life and then to support that suggestion with two reasons (note the numbers 1 and 2). However, the student really has only one reason. The student does have a sense of the principal as audience, but does not attempt to persuade the principal.

Suggestions

Have student do an oral or written task analysis of assignments before beginning the assignment.

Have students who have difficulty in persuasive arguments rewrite each other's composition to make them more persuasive.

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Comments

The composition lacks a general plan of organization.

The student needs work in developing paragraphs by using a generalization as a topic sentence which is then supported by details, reasons, or examples.

The student needs help with appropriate transition.

The student needs help to exclude repetitions and irrelevant details.

Suggestions

Have student outline his or her own composition after it has been written. If it is impossible to outline logically, show how the organization could be changed.

Have students outline each other's compositions to see if a logical outline can be developed.

Have class brainstorm an assignment and develop ideas on the chalkboard to demonstrate adequate development and arrangement.

Word Choice

Comment

There are no obvious problems in this composition.

Suggestion

Look at other examples of student's writing.

Sentence Structure/Syntax

Comments

The composition shows a lack of sentence sense, containing many fragments and phrases in place of complete sentences. Student needs help with problem of vague pronoun reference. The subject is missing in several sentences.

Suggestions

Have student read the composition aloud and insert missing subjects and other words to form complete sentences.

Have students work in pairs, reading each other's compositions aloud in order to discover lack of punctuation.

Give a small group of students with similar problems a list of fragments which they will expand into full sentences.

Use sentence combining exercises.

Mechanics

Comments

The spelling errors: "durring," "wich," "differents," "to," and "youre" may be a lack of proofreading and revision. Punctuation errors are related to the lack of sentence sense.

Suggestions

Have students rewrite their compositions in various ways for different audiences, encouraging more revision and proofreading.

Encourage students to help each other revise, edit, and proofread.

Have students rewrite and expand each other's compositions to a specified number of words. Have the original writer compare versions.

I think if schools could live To Together without all the vilonce stument would MAY-BY Like It Better.

Reason #1

We all go to Schoo so way Fight. I and many other people think Fighting is DUM. school won't Kill you and it is Not posion Nethor. Some ~~people~~ Kids Fight because They think it Kool But it Not. Some kids Fight Because thay Don't want To Be call Names. Well Name's Don't hurt as much as a Fight Dose

Reason #2

MayBY one reason some stuent Skip is Because They are scart To Fight. Said a gril get Mad at other gril and ~~[illegible]~~ Says I am going to Beat you up and the other girl Dose Not want to Fight well! them she is going to ~~the~~ Skip ~~the~~ her classes That other gril is IN. I am Not Said That this is the only reason For skipping But that it could ~~anyway I think The school would~~

anyway I think The school would Be much happer with Not so much Fighting.

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWER

PERSUASION #2

Rhetorical Task

Comments

The student seems to understand the directions. The student realizes that he or she must make some kind of statement and give two supporting reasons. The student does this even to the extent of isolating his or her "suggestion" and following it with two clearly labeled "reasons." The student also understands that he or she is supposed to persuade someone in authority that his or her suggestion is sound. The student is consistent in his or her point of view, always retaining the first person perspective.

Suggestions

This student seems to have an understanding of what is expected. However, it might further assist the student to underline the operative parts of the task. The student might derive further confidence and authority from the use of schema such as the one found on page 42.

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Comments

The student starts out with what he or she believes to be a suggestion for improving school life. If there were less violence, students would like school better. However, he or she does not pursue this suggestion with two logical reasons showing how or why students would like school better if there were less violence. Instead, he or she gives as his or her first "reason" a philosophical evaluation that fighting is stupid. The second "reason" is that some students skip classes because they don't want to fight. He or she has shifted his or her focus from "fighting" to "skipping." The first paragraph (Reason #1) is a series of generalizations without details; the second paragraph (Reason #2) is a series of details without a generalization. The student realizes that he or she is supposed to work within a specific framework; what he or she doesn't understand, however, is how to do this. The student lacks the ability to state a clear thesis and develop his or her reasons based on the stated thesis.

Suggestions

Use of a simple outline might prove helpful to this student. First, the student should write a sentence stating what his or her suggestion is. Then he or she should underline and thus isolate the word or words that encompass the essence of his or her suggestion. For example: "School life would be better if there were less fighting." He or she should then be asked to write one sentence for each of two reasons why "less fighting" would improve school life. Use of the schema on page 42 might prove helpful.

Sentence Structure/Syntax

Comments

The student varies sentence structure, using compound and complex sentences and varying sentence beginnings. In general, the student seems to have fairly good sentence sense. However, there are inflectional errors; e.g., "they don't want to be call names," "a girl get mad," plus what seems to be an agreement error, "some student skip." The student's difficulty with inflectional endings and with agreement may be due to careless proofreading. Several samples of writing would have to be examined in order to make a determination.

Suggestions

The teacher should note the student's speech pattern to see whether the student tends to drop the endings of certain words in speech. An exercise the teacher may wish to use is to have the student read a piece of his or her own writing into a tape recorder. After listening to the tape, if the teacher finds inflectional problems, the teacher should note them and discuss them with the student. The recording should be played back so the student can listen for the places where he or she omits inflectional endings. Then the student should be given the opportunity to revise the paper, and tape the piece once more, noting especially the proper pronunciation of inflectional endings.

Word Choice

Comments

The student's level of usage is too informal, even "slangy" for the purpose for which it is intended - to persuade the principal to the writer's point of view. This seems to indicate that the pupil has difficulty in recognizing that there are different levels of usage for different purposes and audiences.

The student's word choice seems to be vague and limited, also. The student uses the word school at both the beginning and the end where he or she really means students. The student has difficulty producing the correct forms of certain words (Said a gril (sic) get (sic) mad. . .," "(I) am not said that . . .").

The double negative is apparently misused for emphasis.

Suggestions

The student should be made aware of differences in levels of usage by providing him or her with samples of writing at different levels and helping him or her to discover what the differences are. The student might then be directed to write several brief letters dealing with the same topic, each one meant for a different audience.

Careful questioning by the teacher can help the pupil make clear in his or her own mind what he or she wants to say; e.g., "In this place, do you mean to say school or students?" "Are you talking about schools in general or this school in particular?"

Oral sentence patterning could help the student in developing more awareness of suitable word forms. For example: Say a girl gets mad at another girl. Say a boy gets mad at another boy. Say a customer gets mad at a clerk. Say the boss gets mad at a worker.

Point out that the conventions of standard American English do not provide for a double negative. Have the student orally explore several ways to rephrase the sentence using negatives correctly. Have the student select the way that most nearly says what he or she wants, and rewrite the sentence.

Mechanics

Comments

While there are numerous spelling errors, they can be grouped so that a pattern emerges. The student obviously has difficulty with letter reversals (vilonce, posion, dose, gril), and also tends to misspell phonetically. Misspellings probably accurately reflect the student's erroneous pronunciation (scart/scared, beaf/beat, way/why). The power of advertising may be seen in the spelling kool (e.g. Kool-Ade, Kool cigarettes).

A lack of proofreading skills is also evident (totogether, thay, schoo).

The student prints rather than uses cursive script. In addition, the student uses capitals and lowercase haphazardly, although certain letters seem generally to be capitalized in initial positions (e.g., F, P, B, D).

Suggestions

Provide the student with crossword puzzles, anagrams, Scrabble. Have the student try to make shorter words from a longer word. Have the student make up puzzles using his or her own spelling words.

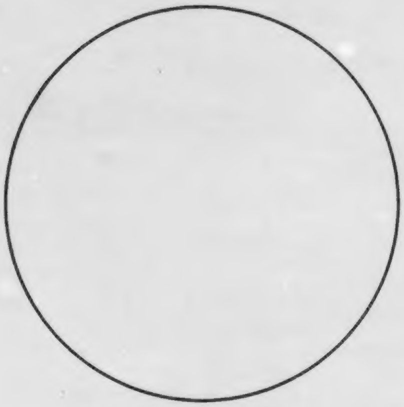
Spelling will improve as the student's awareness increases. Give the student the opportunity to perform and tape original and/or prepared materials, placing emphasis on careful pronunciation. Student and teacher discuss tape for one aspect; e.g., "Did I pronounce all the endings of my words?" or "Did I pronounce the words correctly?"

Time should be set aside for proofreading after the student has revised each piece of writing. Student should proofread for one type of error at a time; e.g., capitals or end punctuation.

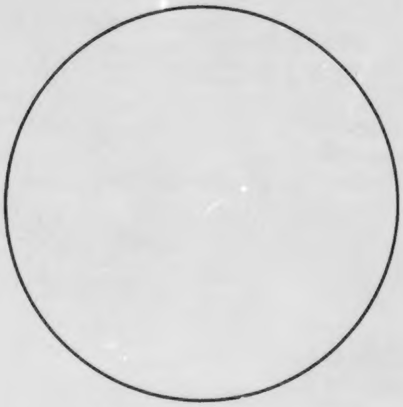
The student should make a chart showing capitals and lowercase letters and should have it readily available. A wall chart should also be available. Student should concentrate on capitalizing "I," the first word in a sentence, and proper nouns.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING PERSUASIVE WRITING

1. A strategy to assist students in determining a position and identifying supporting details: Students put spokes in each wheel - each spoke is a supporting detail (reason) for a position.

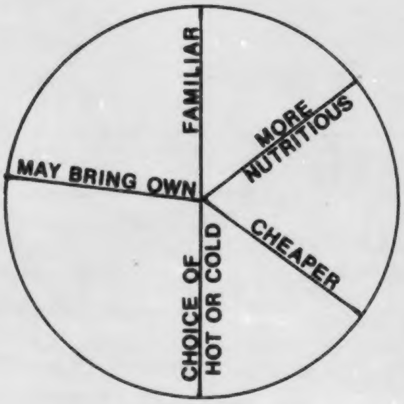


SCHOOL LUNCH

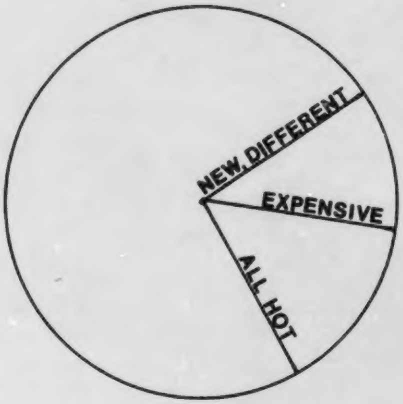


FAST FOOD LUNCH

The positioning of the spokes as well as the number of spokes should help the student organize his thinking and position.


FAMILIAR
MORE NUTRITIOUS
MAY BRING OWN
CHEAPER
CHOICE OF HOT OR COLD

SCHOOL LUNCH


NEW, DIFFERENT
EXPENSIVE
ALL HOT

FAST FOOD LUNCH

2. For those students who have difficulty visualizing the relationship of parts to the whole, the following schema might be useful.

Persuasive Composition

Statement of Opinion: ______________________________

____

____

____

Statement of Reason #1: ______________________________

____

____

Examples of Reason #1:

1. ______________________________

2. ______________________________

Statement of Reason #2: ______________________________

____

____

Examples of Reason #2:

1. ______________________________

2. ______________________________

Conclusion: ______________________________

____

____

____

3. Have students role-play different people who might be trying to persuade a specific audience; for example:

A show-off trying to impress the principal with his or her huge vocabulary. Student should use as many descriptive words as possible.

A student who is scientifically oriented who uses words sparingly but precisely.

A student who is proud of his or her knowledge of big vocabulary words.

4. Objectives: Students will compose a paragraph of persuasion with the audience clearly indicated.

Prewriting: Role Playing:

1. Student council member asks principal for permission to hold a "battle of the bands" (last year's had been disruptive).

2. Student asks to use family car. (Student's grades questionable.)

3. Administrator addresses school board concerning desirability of installing a swimming pool in the high school.

Each involves:

1. Analysis of character
2. Use of logic
3. Organization of facts and statistics
4. Knowledge of most useful facts and arguments

Writing Assignment: A paragraph of persuasion on one of the following topics:

1. Legalization of marijuana
2. Capital punishment
3. Lower the age for senior driver's license

Students will write two paragraphs on one of the topics. One paragraph will be directed toward a peer; the other toward a person in authority (parent, legislator, police officer, etc.)

Postwriting Evaluation: Reading and sharing compositions:

Class chooses best arguments and expressions thereof and rewrites paragraph in groups.

Possibility for adaptation of lesson for all levels.

For junior high, concentration will be on paragraph formation, organization of supporting material, and development of concluding idea.

For high school, concentrate on more advanced development of paragraph structure, more attention to style and tone, with possible culmination in a research paper.

5. Objectives: To gain experience in the formulation of an opinion

To compose an effective persuasive letter

Prewriting Activities:

1. Assign students to bring in what they believe is a good "Letter to the Editor" from a local paper. Discuss these letters and develop a list of criteria for determining the effectiveness of such letters. (clarity of expression, logical presentation, vocabulary, etc.)
2. Review proper letter form with class.
3. Arbitrarily divide students into groups and assign each group an aspect of school life (curriculum, discipline, extra curricular, physical plant, scheduling and time, etc.). Each group is assigned the task of developing a list of suggested improvements in their aspect of school life. A reporter chosen by the group summarizes the group's recommendations while another member of the group lists the suggestions on the board.

Writing Activity:

Each student selects one topic of his or her own choice and writes a "Letter to the Editor" of the school newspaper. (The audience and purpose should then be evident.)

Postwriting Evaluation and Discussion:

1. Teacher selects ten best letters and presents them to the class.
2. Using the previously determined criteria for an effective persuasive letter, the class selects the one letter to send to the school paper.

6. The teacher, being a mean sort, plans to punish you: a bad mark and a letter/phone call home, because you haven't brought in any homework for the past week and a half. But if you can give the teacher a good reason why you will not do these things any more, the teacher will agree not to "prosecute." Try to write a reason that will be convincing to the rest of the group, who will read from the teacher's point of view.

ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES

Many of the activities and strategies described in this section have been suggested by participants in various workshops led by members of the Bureau of English Education. Others have been adopted from other sources and many have been devised by members of the Bureau.

Rhetorical Task

Understanding Directions

1. Have the student read an assignment and rewrite it or retell it in the student's own words. Have the student explain the assignment to another student. The second student is to keep questioning until he or she feels confident of what to do.

2. Have student analyze instructions by underlining key words and discussing their application to the task. This analysis should be applied to other assignments as well as writing assignments so that the student gets in the habit of analyzing instructions.

3. Have students compile a glossary of essay question terms defined in their own words; e.g., compare, contrast, criticize, define, describe, diagram, discuss, enumerate, evaluate, explain, illustrate, interpret, justify, list, outline, prove, relate, review. (See page 49 of Teaching Writing Right.)

4. Have task read aloud. Brainstorm for generating ideas and approaches. Have students make a "jotted list" of possible ideas to be included in their written response. Have students arrange items in a list so that related ideas are together. Direct students to eliminate irrelevant ideas.

5. If the student did not follow directions for a task, ask him or her to write the instructions for the task he or she did do. Have the student compare these with the original directions.

6. To help students visualize the requirements of the task, teach the use of a box outline. For example, assume that the task requires students to suggest one change in school life and to give two reasons for the change. The students are required to support each reason with specific details.

   Suggested change: Start school an hour later.

Reason #1	Details
Time to eat breakfast	1. Better nourishment 2. More alert students 3. More satisfied parents
Reason #2	**Details**
Reduce tardiness	1. No excuse for late arrival 2. Better use of class time 3. Fewer upset teachers.

7. Have students write directions for accomplishing a simple task, such as making a peanut butter sandwich, folding a paper airplane, tying a shoelace. Have other students follow the directions literally. Discuss whether a failure to accomplish the task resulted from failure to write directions clearly or to follow them carefully. Have students rewrite the directions to make them more explicit. Have other students analyze the steps involved in the directions.

8. Have the class make a maze while student A is outside the room. Ask student B to write the directions for getting through the maze. Ask student C to read the directions to guide the blindfolded student A through the maze. Discuss any problems that arise. Did problems come from poor directions, from poor following of directions, or from poor orientation?

9. Ask the student to cut a passage into readable parts, then decide which parts fit the given assignment. The student rewrites the passage, organizing and expanding those parts that fit. Ask the student to expand those parts that don't fit the old assignment into a new assignment, the student writing the directions for the assignment.

Understanding Rhetorical Purpose

1. Have the students write a sentence in their own words stating the rhetorical purpose of the composition assignment.

2. Ask the students to compare an editorial and a news report. Have the students point out differences by selecting the details that fit one, but not the other. Ask students to attend school events, take notes, and then use the notes to write both a news report and an editorial.

3. Provide the students with five or six short pieces of writing which obviously have different purposes. Ask the students to state the purpose of each piece. Help students analyze the means the authors used to accomplish their purposes. Ask students to write a short piece for the same purpose as one of the models. Have them analyze each other's papers to see by what means the student accomplished the purpose.

4. Divide the class into groups. Give each group a picture of a different scene. Ask each group, using the picture as a basis, to write two or three short compositions for different purposes; for example, to persuade someone to buy real estate in the area,to report to a police officer about the scene of a crime, to persuade a government agency to preserve the environment.

   Have groups exchange pictures and compositions. Ask each group to decide what the purpose of each composition is, and to evaluate to what extent the purpose has been accomplished. Discuss how to improve the compositions to accomplish the intended purpose.

5. Divide the class into groups of three or five. Give each group several objects. Ask each group to write two or three group compositions about the objects. The composition possibilities include:

   Explaining the use of the objects to a visitor from outer space

   Persuading a group of savages to take the objects in exchange for your life

   Selling the other groups a new object made from combining features of the given object

Have the groups exchange papers and discuss how the results differ because of differences in intended audience and purpose.

Using Conventions of the Mode: Letter, Report, Persuasion, etc.

1. Have posters of one or more acceptable business letter forms posted in the classroom. At every possible opportunity have students write real business letters that, for example, ask for information or free materials which may relate to classwork.

2. Have the student interview another student about a particular school event. Ask the student to write the report, stressing the interviewee's point of view. Another possibility is to have the student interview participants of the event: e.g., director, soloist, chorus member of the annual concert; player, referee, spectator, ticket taker of a basketball game.

3. Have students examine various types of reports, such as memos, newspaper reports, encyclopedia articles, interviews. Help them find patterns common to each type of reportage. Ask students to choose one of the patterns and write a short report on something based on his or her own knowledge.

4. Provide the students with examples of epitaphs, slogans, Who's Who entries, obituaries, recipes, menus. After students have discussed and imitated the forms, they may enjoy a humorous approach to the writing of these modes. An interesting class display could result.

Keeping a Consistent Point of View

1. Provide the students with a list of details such as the following:

   The black sedan slammed into the blue convertible.
   The woman's name was Margaret Smith.
   The damage to the sedan was estimated at $300.
   No one was injured.
   The driver of the sedan was a man.
   The driver of the convertible was a woman.
   The man's name was Henry Green.
   It happened this morning.
   The driver of the sedan was given a ticket.
   The damage to the convertible was estimated at $200.

   Write on the chalkboard a list of various accounts which might be written about the accident.

   Example:

   Police Blotter Report
   Newspaper Account
   Editorial
   Imaginative Account

Discuss with the students the ways in which these accounts would differ. Elicit the fact that word choice, selection of detail, and pattern of organization will convey the attitude and purpose of the account. Then have the students write each account. Duplicate samples and have the students evaluate them for effectiveness in developing point of view.

2. Provide an action photograph and ask students to write an eyewitness account of the incident. Discuss the resulting accounts for consistency of point of view.

3. Have the student describe a specific place from the point of view of an inanimate object in the place such as:

   The interior of a refrigerator from the point of view of a quart of milk
   The inside of a dresser drawer from the point of view of a sock
   A schoolroom from the point of view of the pencil sharpener

   Have students check each other for consistency, asking such things as "Could this be seen (smelled, felt, heard) from the perspective of the milk bottle?" "Does the writing stay in character?"

4. Have students write compositions on the same thing from two different points of view. For example:

   About the wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood" from the point of view of a wild animal lover and from the point of view of the woodsman

   About a certain food from the point of view of a dietitian and from the point of view of someone who hates to eat that food

   Discuss the changes that were made when the point of view changed. Discuss ways of keeping internal consistency.

5. Develop a skit. (From Long Island Workshop, 1978)

   A. Prewriting Activity:

      1. Teacher writes skit involving a conflict.
      2. Students act out skit as class observes.
      3. Teacher describes how he or she perceived the scene. The teacher represents omniscient point of view.
      4. One student who performed describes what happened. Student represents first person point of view.
      5. The class describes what happened. They represent third person.
      6. Way to make purpose and audience clear:

         How else can this situation be presented?
         Examples elicited might be newspaper articles, short story, witness account in a trial, drama, poem, monologue.

      Then discuss how the description might be changed by using various formats. Match up various formats with points of view, bringing up terminology at this time.

   B. Writing Activity:

      1. Write the situation from two different points of view, using two different formats.

2. Excerpts from student writing are copied and distributed. Points of view used should be identified by students. Difference in mood, vocabulary, effect should be discussed.
3. Adaptation. (This exercise could be performed at any level.) For high school use novels instead of skits.

Demonstrating a Sense of Audience

1. Provide as many opportunities as possible for writing for a real audience: letters to an elderly relative, to a cousin, to the principal, to the editor. Discuss the changes the writer must make for different audiences. See that the letters are mailed or delivered.
2. Have students write a story to tell a kindergarten class, 4th grade, 7th grade, and adults. Have students explain how the story changed for each audience.
3. Have students write two versions of an incident, one for their parents and one for their friends. Tell students that the basic facts must be the same. Have students exchange both versions of the incident and list the differences they find. Discuss the influence of audience on diction, emphasis, tone, purpose.
4. Have students write letters asking for advice on a real or imaginary problem experienced by themselves, friends, relatives, perhaps even by characters in comic strips or news stories. Duplicate the letters and circulate them in the class. Ask students to choose a letter and write the response. Have the original writer decide whether the response is appropriate and explain the reasons for the decision.

Relation of Parts to a Unified Whole

Organizing and Sequencing

1. Have students practice sequencing by arranging words, phrases, or sentences on separate 3x5 file cards into a specified order.

2. Provide the student with a set of pictures (animals, cars, planes, clothing, furniture, etc.). Have student group items according to common factors. For each factor, the student writes a sentence stating the factor in common, then lists the appropriate objects under the topic sentence in an outline form. Student then writes one or more paragraphs following the outline, relating the objects to the topic sentence.

3. Provide the student with a shoebox in which there is an assortment of objects. Have the student group the objects according to similar characteristics and orally explain the basis. Have the student select one type of organization and write a sentence explaining the nature of the organization. Then the student is to write one sentence for each object and thereby relate the object to the category.

4. Student works with a peer. Each student is given a picture and lists as many details as possible, not in any special order. Students exchange lists and organize partner's details into categories. Students then try to write a description of the partner's picture based on the details and a topic sentence he or she has written describing each category. The number of paragraphs would be based on the students' ability level.

5. Ask students, "If you were going to open a grocery store, how would you put items together? Why?"

6. Ask students to make up categories to use in grouping everyone in the room.

7. Provide the student with a number of foreign and/or domestic stamps mounted on cards. Have the student see how many different categories can be developed. Have the student select one category and describe some of the stamps in that category in a brief paragraph. As students progress, they could develop a report on several of the categories.

8. To aid organizing skills, teach the simplified box outline rather than the more complicated Harvard outline. Questions are posed or developed through discussion. Each question is required to help the student develop each paragraph more fully. Details are elicited by asking the journalistic questions. Each question could later become the topic sentence by converting the question to a statement.

Sample #1

Question	Answer	Details
What was the book about?	A man	Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
Who was your favorite or least favorite character?	Sally	Why? When?
What was your overall opinion of the book?	Liked it	Why? At what point?
For whom would you recommend this book?	Kids who like science	Why?

Sample #2

Question	Answer	Details
What happened first?		Who did it? When? Where? Why? How?
What happened second?		Who did it? When? Where? Why? How?
What happened third?		Who did it? When? Where? Why? How?
What happened last?		Who did it? When? Where? Why? How?

9. Have two students sit back to back. One student examines an object and describes it to a second student, who attempts to draw the object from the description. The first student will need to use words to indicate direction, transition, and appropriate sequencing.

10. The student is to play the role of a detective who must report a crime to the police chief. Use a well-known story, fable, nursery rhyme, etc. and list the details out of sequence. Have the student reorganize the events and write a report to the chief.

11. If a paper is poorly organized, have the student try to outline the paper as it is written. Discuss the difficulties with the student and then ask the student to make a new outline which would indicate a better organization. To encourage revision, you may allow the student to rewrite the composition for a better grade, or you may feel that in some cases the new outline is a sufficient learning experience.

12. Provide students with a list of objects under a general heading, such as objects that might be found in a kitchen cabinet or items that might be useful on a vacation. Have students organize the items into categories. Have them explain the principles of organization used, such as utensils and foods or clothing and sports equipment. It would be best to do one list with the class first, having students suggest the categories.

Have students devise their own lists and ways to organize the lists. Have them write a topic sentence for a composition which would evolve around the lists as organized. Discuss the appropriateness of the topic sentence to the principles used in organizing.

13. For report writing, put phrases on 3x5 cards. Students may shuffle cards to arrive at a pattern of organization. When student is satisfied with the organization of sentences, he or she may proceed to write the report.

14. To develop patterns of organization, develop a group of details. Place each detail on a separate 3x5 card. Have students place cards with related details together, making several piles of cards. Then have students write a topic sentence card for the top of each pile. Now provide index cards containing one transitional word or phrase per card. Have students place transition words between appropriate detail cards. Discuss sequence of cards with students. Students sort cards to arrive at desired order. Have students work from cards to write the report.

Variation: Include some cards with irrelevant details which must be eliminated. Use an actual experience, like a student trip, to generate the detail cards.

Maintaining Coherence and Using Transition

1. Remove the topic sentence from several paragraphs. Have students write their own topic sentences. Discuss results.

2. Display a paragraph that has irrelevant material. Have students discuss which sentences are irrelevant and why.

3. Take a short magazine article. Cut the paragraphs apart. Have students reassemble the paragraphs in order.

4. Have students search through current books to find words and phrases which the authors use to move from one paragraph to the next in a smooth manner.

5. Have students generate a list of words which denote time order, such as first, then, next, finally. Have students use these words to organize a group of details into a time-ordered sentence or paragraph.

6. Remind students that the journalistic questions of who, what, where, when, why, how can apply to several types of writing, although all the questions are not necessarily answered in the first paragraph when the writing is not a newspaper article. Have students answer the journalistic questions orally about some writing that is planned.

Have students suggest transition or "glue" words that might hold the answers to the questions together. Make lists of "glue" words on the board. (Examples: also, finally, in fact, for example, on the other hand.) Have students write the assignment, using the answers to the questions and some of the words in the lists.

A variation of the activity is to prepare a cloze paragraph and have students insert the transitional words. Another variation would be to have students rewrite one another's compositions to include "glue" words.

7. For correcting ambiguous pronoun reference, direct students to find a replacement word for every pronoun used. Have student re-read the passage to determine improvement, if any; e.g., if "it" is overused, allow only one use of "it." All others must be replaced in rewriting.

Making Generalizations and Using Specific Detail

1. To help students find or make a generalization in report writing, provide students with a list of facts. Have students find which facts are alike or related. Have them group the related facts.

Ask the students to explain how the items in the group are alike. Then ask them to write a statement which is supported by all the facts.

2. For helping students learn main idea:

a. Have students examine the headline and the first paragraph of several newspaper articles.

b. Discuss the paragraph and the headlines to find the main idea.

c. Ask students to write a lead paragraph of a newspaper article, preferably a real school or community event.

d. Have students exchange paragraphs and write the headlines for one another's paragraphs.

e. Discuss the appropriateness of the headline in relation to the main idea or, if necessary, the lack of a main idea.

3. Provide the students with a number of foreign and/or domestic stamps. Have each student select one stamp, examine it carefully, and describe it in a paragraph. Have another student try to pick out that stamp from among the others in order to test the accuracy and completeness of the description.

4. To expand a piece of limited writing, help students formulate questions that would develop material for an interesting conclusion, for example:

> Did you enjoy the experience of interviewing Mr. Fuller? Do you look forward to seeing his slides? Would you consider taking a similar trip? What more would you like to know about Egypt?

5. Ask the students to make a general observation based on their own experience such as "Snowstorms create problems." The students must then illustrate the generalization with examples such as "Travel is difficult," "Walking is hazardous."

6. To teach a lesson in generating and organizing ideas, give the students a number of pictures on the same topic; e.g., sports, animals, buildings. Have the students organize the pictures into categories. For example, the student who has the set of sports pictures might arrange them into spectator/participant, group/individual and so on. The student lists the sports in each category. Then the student chooses a category and makes a general statement about whether he or she likes or dislikes the sports in that category. This generalization becomes the topic sentence for developing a paragraph.

7. To elicit specific details, have students examine with a magnifying glass certain small objects which you have provided. Have them list up to 25 details that describe one of the objects. Have them include details that appeal to as many senses as possible. Have the students decide how to organize or group the details. Have them write a description of the object, using the details on the list.

8. To elicit details, have students make up survival kits for various purposes, for example, a school survival kit, a minority survival kit, an inflation survival kit, a sailboat survival kit. Have the students organize the contents into categories and write an essay explaining the necessity and use of each item.

9. To elicit details, have students work in groups of 3 to 5. Provide each group with a picture of a scene. Have them, as a group, list 20-25 details that they can see in the picture.

Then ask them to choose which details they would use if they were:

a) Travel agents looking for clients

b) Environmentalists addressing a civic group

c) Prospectors looking for backing from investors

Discuss not only the use of detail, but also the effect of purpose and audience on the choice of detail.

Variations: a) Have students exchange pictures and compare lists when both groups are finished with the second picture. b) Have one group look at a picture right side up and the other upside down to see if position varies the details.

Sentence Structure/Syntax

1. Have the student read his or her composition into a tape recorder and then play back the tape to pick up punctuation errors, or, in conference with the teacher, have the student read the paper aloud. Often a student will detect run-on sentences or fragments in the process of reading them aloud.

2. Dictation is a useful technique for developing sentence sense in those students who ramble on or punctuate erratically. Select an effective passage for dictation which will consider the reading level of your group, but give even more weight to the interest level. To begin, type the paragraph eliminating all beginning capitals and end punctuation. Give a copy to students who need to improve their sentence sense. Ask the students to capitalize and punctuate as you dictate. Your intonation should guide the students so that they know when and how to end the sentence, and when to capitalize to indicate the beginning of a new sentence. If your students are more advanced, you can use a more complete dictation in which the student has to write every word. (Idea from WEDGE)

3. Give students several sentence fragments to turn into sentences. These may be from student writing or fragments the teacher has devised, such as:

Bringing one sack each

Don't use peanut butter where

The fire, spreading fast,

If people were living on the moon,

Discuss the finished work as to whether the sentences are complete or not.

Ask students to choose one of the completed sentences and use it in a paragraph.

4. Devise sets of cards with part of a sentence on one card and the rest of the sentence on another. Have students find their partners and together write a sentence that could logically follow the original one. Discuss the clues to finding the partners. Discuss whether the sentences following the original are complete.

5. Divide the class into five or six teams of six students each. Each student receives a copy of the same kernel sentence with a set of six directions for expansion. The first student in each team rushes to the team's assigned place at the chalkboard to complete the first directive, then hands the piece of chalk to the next member of the team who is to follow the second directive based on what the first student has written, and so on for all the members of the team. The last team to finish is called "The Fragments." For example:

Kernel sentence: The man entered the store.

1. Tell what job or profession the man has.
2. Use two adjectives to describe the man.
3. Use a more specific verb in the sentence.

4. Use two adverbs to explain how he did the action.
5. Tell what kind of store.
6. Use two adjectives to describe the store.

Possible final answer: The tall, thin plumber rushed breathlessly and excitedly into the small, neighborhood hardware store.

Variation:

Expansion With Guide Words. (For students who catch on slowly or for whom practice with a particular structure is needed, the use of clue words may be desirable.)

Kernel sentence: The girl won.

1. Expand to show how the girl won. (by)
2. Expand to show which girl won. (who)
3. Expand to tell what the girl won. (what)
4. Expand to describe what the girl won. (which)

Possible final answer: By running much faster than her competition, the girl who had practiced hard won the first prize, which was a shining, silver trophy. (Idea from WEDGE)

6. Relay Game - (Idea from Tiedt and Tiedt, Language Arts Activities for the Classroom)

a. Divide the students into two teams.

b. Write a word on the blackboard.

c. One student at a time from each team comes up and adds a word, either before or after the words that are already there.

d. The object is to create a sentence and the goal is to keep the sentence going. The team that cannot provide another word for the sentence loses that round.

e. The game begins again with a new word.

7. Have students write one sentence about a topic. Write two. Write three. Have them combine these three sentences. Then have them try sentences about two or more topics and show the relationship or lack of it between the two.

8. Use overhead transparencies of student work to identify problems in sentence structure. Have the class suggest a variety of ways to improve the sentence. After the oral suggestions have been written, be sure to have students read them aloud. This will reinforce the requirement that students should always read their compositions out loud before submitting them.

Sentence Construction Skills

The student is expected to understand and to practice sentence construction skills throughout the writing program. Beginning with the basic concept of slotting at grade three, these skills are reinforced as required at each grade level. The skills of embedding, varying sentence types, and expanding a sentence into a paragraph are sophisticated and require a firm basis derived through practice in the more elementary skills of slotting, expanding, and movability. The following should be helpful in preparing materials to teach these skills.

1. Slotting

Elicit words that will occupy the positions of key nouns, verbs, and predicate nouns or adjectives in the basic kernel sentences. The students choose appropriate words or synonyms from their oral or sight vocabulary to fill in slots or replace existing words at these strategic places in the sentences.

Examples: The sweet candy tastes good. (Adjective)
sugary delicious
scrumptious

My friend is a fine athlete. (Noun)
pal sportsman
crony runner

On a clear night, the stars shine. (Verb)
glimmer
glow

The snow melted slowly as the day neared its end. (Adverb)
gradually
quickly

2. Expanding

Enrich sentences by the addition of a variety of modifiers: adjectives, adverbials, appositives, dependent clauses. The student selects his or her own words, phrases, and clauses, and inserts them in appropriate places in sentences.

Examples:

The Statue of Liberty, _______, stands in New York Harbor. (Appositive)
a symbol of freedom
a national monument

The _______ Scouts _______ planned a _______ hike _______.
older eagerly weekly in Maine
seven carefully strenuous up the mountain
(Adjective)
(Adverb)
(Adjective)
(Prepositional Phrase)

3. Movability

Reorganize sentences by changing the placement of movable words, or groups of words, within a sentence. The student decides which placements not only will reflect his or her meaning correctly, but also will produce the intended emphasis or coherence with adjacent sentences.

Examples: 1. Columbus crossed the wide Atlantic to find a new route to the Indies.

or

2. To find a new route to the Indies, Columbus crossed the wide Atlantic.

1. When autumn came, our pioneer ancestors often had husking bees to prepare the grain.

or

2. To prepare the grain, when autumn came, our ancestors often had husking bees.

or

3. Often, when autumn came, our pioneer ancestors, to prepare the grain, had husking bees.

4. Embedding

Have the students combine short related sentences into a compound sentence, or into a sentence in which one of the original sentences is carried over (as a clause, a compound subject or predicate, a verbal phrase, a noun phrase, a prepositional phrase, an appositive, an adjective or adverb). The students thus generate a variety of grammatical structures to enhance style and serve their purposes.

Examples: A dilemma is a problem.
The problem has two solutions.
Both solutions are bad.

A dilemma is a problem with two solutions, both of which are bad.

The table is littered with refuse.
The refuse belongs to other people.

The table is littered with refuse of others.

The table is littered with refuse that belongs to other people.

5. Varying Sentence Types

Have students generate declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory sentences, and transform one type to another. The students thus add variety to their writing of sentences to better accomplish their purposes. (Portions of Sentence Construction Skills from: Edwin Ezor, Individualized Language Arts, New Jersey, New Jersey Department of Education, 1974.)

Examples:	Columbus discovered America.	Declarative
	Did you know that Columbus discovered America?	Interrogative
	Columbus discovered America!	Exclamatory
	Discover America, Columbus.	Imperative

An example of applying the various techniques to one sentence follows:

Slotting	The German shepherd darted into the chamber. A puppy bounded into the poorly lit room.
Expanding	The German shepherd, Igor's favorite, darted menacingly with drooling jaws ajar into the poorly lit room. A miniscule puppy, yipping high-pitched yelps, bounded into the damp, poorly lit room, giving the impression he had at least eight legs.
Movability	With drooling jaws ajar, Igor's favorite German shepherd darted menacingly into the poorly lit room. Yipping high-pitched yelps, a miniscule puppy bounded into the damp, poorly lit room, giving the impression he had at least eight legs.
Embedding	The German shepherd, unlike the puppy who bounded into the poorly lit room, darted into the chamber.
Varying Sentence Types	Was it the German shepherd that darted into the chamber? Did the puppy really have eight legs or did it only seem so as he bounded into the damp, poorly lit room? "Get in." The German shepherd darted into the chamber. What a sight! The miniscule puppy bounded into the damp, poorly lit room.
Expanding a Sentence Into a Paragraph	The German shepherd, Igor's favorite, darted menacingly with drooling jaws ajar into the darkened chamber. His huge form, so much more massive than the other hunting dogs, threw an even darker shadow onto the black walls. He seemed to anticipate the prey which was contained within these walls and to relish the thought of devouring it. It was just this evil nature that made Igor cherish the dog.

Word Choice

1. To teach brevity and impact in the use of words, have students make bumper stickers or campaign buttons. Narrowly focus the topic and limit the number of words.

2. Use telegramming as an activity to teach sentence reduction when students tend to ramble. Example: Have students write the principal a ten-word telegram which will request a needed change. When students are able to express the idea in as few words as possible, practice slotting to expand the sentence and to achieve sentence variety.

3. In writing poetry, have students use various forms to increase vocabulary and also to develop awareness of the importance of using the right word in the right place. Examples of such forms are triante, cinquain, diamante and haiku.

4. Use overhead transparencies of student work to identify vague, weak, or repetitive words. Circle these words. Have student supply replacement words. Discuss how specific words clarify the meaning of a sentence.

5. When word choice is repetitive or too vague, direct students to practice slotting; that is, replace such general words as nice, pretty good, a lot, fun, etc. with more specific words. Have the class orally develop lists of replacement words for those general words most commonly used. Have students place these lists on large wall posters as composition aids.

6. Having the students express their own ideas while imitating word patterns or sentence rhythms can be a good way to help some students. Select an opening line from a piece of prose. Ask the students to write it in their notebooks, changing one or two words. Share these with the class; e.g., "He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger." (Jack London, "To Build a Fire") "Monday is no different from any other weekday in Jefferson now." (William Faulkner, "The Evening Sun")

Student: Friday is no different from any other weekday in school now. They no longer have assembly or day trips on Fridays; we just study and study. (Idea from WEDGE)

7. Have the student prepare two sets of words that describe the same quality - one positively and one negatively. For example: You are skinny, but I am slim.

The student then chooses a character from fiction, from history, from his or her own acquaintence, etc. The student lists two sets of words to describe the character, one set positive, and one set negative. Then the student writes one paragraph for each set of words; i.e., each paragraph describes the same person, but from a different point of view.

8. Have students role play. Tell them: "Pretend you are reading your composition to a person for whom English is not the native language. How would you explain the slang terms or figures of speech?" Examples: "His car is a lemon." "The team bombed out."

9. To develop awareness of trite adjectives, make a ditto of overused adjectives in phrases. Ask students orally to replace trite adjectives with more colorful adjectives. After a few examples, pair students to complete the phrases on the ditto. On chalkboard or overhead transparency, construct a list of colorful adjectives for each trite example. Students may copy these lists in their writing journals. Now assign two adjectives to each pair of students. Have them write one sentence for each phrase, substituting one of the colorful adjectives. Then ask each pair of students to make a poster depicting the trite adjective, the list of colorful replacements, and their use in original sentences. Display posters in the classroom.

10. To stress the difference between the spoken and the written word, give the students an assignment in which they are asked to take a piece written in a conversational style and rewrite it for a more formal audience; i.e., the newspaper or a magazine.

11. Have students write menus. Use as a model a real menu that has imaginative names and descriptions of foods. Have the students write a menu for a restaurant to which they would like to take someone they love, or someone they hate; a menu that goes into superlatives over meals served in the school cafeteria; a menu for characters in stories. Discuss the word choices for each menu. Have the class suggest other appropriate choices.

12. Have students replace the pronoun subject of a sentence with a specific noun.

Example: She created an unusual thing.
The botanist created an unusual thing.
scientist
author
dress designer
sculptor
window dresser
basketball coach

To expand the exercise, have students then substitute a more specific noun for the vague word "thing."

The botanist created an unusual rose.
The basketball coach created an unusual tactic.

13. To help students generate alternative word choices, give them a paragraph in which one general word is used repeatedly. Ask students to substitute a more specific word in each case. A sample paragraph follows:

It was a nice day in October. Nancy and Jane had on their nice, new dresses. It was a very nice walk to Barbara's house. They both carried packages nicely wrapped in nice paper. Barbara's house had nice flowers in front of it. The other children were already there when Nancy and Jane arrived. They were playing a nice game in Barbara's nicely decorated playroom. The gifts were nicely arranged on the table. Each one used nice manners as she sat down for cake and the nice drinks Barbara's mother offered. The girls sang "Happy Birthday" nicely. On the way home Nancy said to Jane, "Didn't we have a nice time?"

Ask students to underline every repetition of nice or nicely. Have students suggest more interesting replacement words. Make a list on the chalkboard. Direct students to use words from the list to replace every nice or nicely in the paragraph. Write the noun from the "nice" phrase beside the replacement. Example:

nice day
brisk day
sparkling day

enthusiastically
sweetly
leisurely
attractively
melodiously
elegant

sparkling
cheerful
fragrant
proper
sincere

delicious
sunny
correct
brisk
flavorful

tasty
cloudless
colorful
crisp
fashionable

polite
entertaining
amusing
clear
attractive

14. Select an overworked expression, such as "worked hard." Have students generate a list of verbs which could replace "worked" depending upon the person's particular job. Also compile a list of adverb substitutes for "hard" which give a more precise picture. Direct the students to use a dictionary to clearly understand the meaning. Example:

Verbs		Adverbs	
labored	searched	energetically	relentlessly
researched	pondered	painstakingly	doggedly
concentrated	deliberated	thoughtfully	efficiently
experimented	studied	thoroughly	dauntlessly
tested	practiced	endlessly	diligently
struggled	fought	determinedly	effortlessly

Have students combine a verb and an adverb from the lists to replace each "worked hard" in the sentences below.

1. The student worked hard on his topic, using many reference books.
2. The Chinese worked hard to lay as much railroad track as possible.
3. The detectives worked hard to find the solution to the crime.
4. The scientist worked hard to prove her hypothesis.
5. The mathematics student worked hard to solve her mathematics problems.
6. The judge worked hard to reach a decision.
7. The golfer worked hard to improve his stroke.
8. The accountant worked hard to find the tiny error in the bookkeeping.
9. The housewife worked hard to make her house spotless.
10. The Coast Guard worked hard to save the crew of the sinking freighter.

(Suggestions #12, #13, and #14 based on ideas from Learnco, Inc.)

Improving Spelling

1. One of the best motivations for students to correct their own spelling errors is the "publication" of their writing. Publication can be as simple as posting papers on the class bulletin board, or as elaborate as compiling a class anthology. Any writing that is to be read by another reader, whether it is a teacher, an employer, or a peer, deserves careful proofreading and editing. Design such a session to follow every writing session, with dictionary, thesaurus, style book available. Students may also use one another and the teacher as resources. (Idea from WEDGE)

The stress on correct spelling should come during the editing and proofreading stage. It must not be allowed to interfere with the initial writing impulse.

2. Have students circle all words in their own compositions that they are not sure they have spelled right. Work from there to reinforce correct spellings and to correct errors.

3. Have students make and refer to their own personal dictionaries of words they frequently misspell.

4. Have students pair and drill each other. Include proper nouns and possessives in the drill.

5. Use dictation exercises which include paragraphs and sentences as well as single words.

6. Give students oral work to correct pronunciation problems which may cause misspellings.

7. If the student does not seem to be able to copy words correctly from printed material, first try to determine whether there is a physical or psychological problem that prevents the student from copying correctly. If there is no problem of that type, have the student practice copying paragraphs from printed material. The practice might be enlivened by having students try to use different types of calligraphy.

8. Tricks of the Trade in Spelling. Here are twenty-five statements gleaned from *English Journal* articles. (From curriculum of Wantagh Public Schools)

   a. About 1 in 5 errors in high school themes are mistakes in spelling.

   b. In the language of daily writing, there are comparatively few demons to conquer.

   c. There are indications that lack of instruction in syllabication, pronunciation, and rules for spelling guidance could account for the increased number of poor spellers.

   d. There is a direct correlation between reading comprehension and ability to spell; between poor scholarship and poor spelling.

   e. Pupils who read of their own volition acquire both new words and improved spelling as byproducts.

f. The English teacher cannot be the only spelling teacher.

g. Nothing short of 100% attainment in the spelling of a word is acceptable.

h. We have two things to deal with and to bring into working agreement: The chaotic, unpredictable forms of American words and the chaotic, unpredictable attention habits of American youth. We cannot change the spelling.

i. Homonyms should not be taught together. Fundamentally, the problem is one of usage, not spelling. It is valueless to teach homonyms out of context.

j. The ten words most often misspelled in college entrance exams were these: too, its, believe, together, their, principal, committee, therefore, separate, pleasant.

k. Spelling requires words to be examined individually; phonetic and present-day reading methods emphasize the sound and concept of the word rather than the spelling.

l. Spelling is not just drill. It is also mastering the use of words in sentences as they function in actual writing.

m. A limited number of words perfectly known will form a stronger foundation for more complicated words than a host of vague impressions.

n. Dictation is the only satisfactory type of drill that will establish the spelling of a word as an unvarying habit; this drill must be frequent, limited, and cumulative.

o. In selecting words for study, keep in mind the importance and usefulness of the words for the particular age level.

p. The application of the rules for suffixes, doubling, compound adjectives, plurals, and possessives would eliminate a number of errors in spelling.

q. Misspelling may be due to pronunciation, not mispronunciation; for example, "wimin."

r. Spelling must be taught. It should be taught efficiently and effectively since it is an accomplishment of a very low order. Much more time is necessary for positive improvement in written expression and communication.

s. The correlation between mechanical correctness and the ability to express ideas is low. The outside world, however, has a habit of judging by appearances.

t. We must find what words the pupil uses and misses and concentrate on them--not on words he or she does not use or does not know.

u. Every person who can remember anything can learn to spell. The reason for poor success is likely to be that the students have not had the guidance or did not want to take the trouble.

v. Misspellings may well call for recopying the paper before final acceptance.

w. Rules will help the student to a greater sense of security in almost 95% of his or her writing.

x. We can make correctness in spelling a social desirability by convincing the student that his or her mistakes in any of our approved customs--spelling, speech, etiquette, morals--will spoil chances in the future.

y. We can make a sustained attack against misspelling by a definite campaign throughout the entire school district.

9. For Students: How to Learn to Spell (From the curriculum of Wantagh Public Schools) The following synthesis of materials found here and there is offered as a mnemonic device:

a. Use your mouth. Pronounce the word correctly by checking the dictionary. Say each syllable distinctly and look at each syllable as you say it.

b. Use your ears. Hear the word as you say it.

c. Use your mind. Think how the word looks by closing your eyes. See every letter in your mind's eye.

d. Use your eyes. Look at the word to find out whether your spelling is right. If it is not, go through steps a, b, and c again.

e. Use your hand. Write the word without looking at your book and then check the book. Cover the word, write it again, and check the book. Repeat three times.

f. Use your materials. Copy the word in your notebook.

g. Use your time. Study the words and write them from dictation.

Improving Punctuation and Capitalization

1. Give students a passage of student writing from which all capitals have been omitted. Have students place capitals where appropriate. Try this same technique giving them a passage without punctuation, and have them put in the necessary marks. (Idea from curriculum of Bronxville Elementary School)

2. Newspaper hunt. This can be a single person activity, used with a partner, or in small groups. (Idea from Learnco, Inc.)

a. Have students make a list of the different rules of capitalization.

b. Ask students to hunt through a newspaper or magazine for examples to illustrate each rule.

c. Have students cut out the examples and mount them with tape or rubber cement on poster board.

d. Have students write out the rules for each example and mount each rule with the example.

This activity can be used with other forms of punctuation: comma, semicolon, quotation marks.

3. Have the students read their compositions aloud and say "period" every time they come to the appropriate place. Another possibility is to have the student make a certain sound for periods or other punctuation marks.

4. Have students work in pairs, reading each other's compositions aloud. Have them discuss difficulties caused by lack of punctuation.

5. Use punctuation "bees," similar to spelling "bees." The student draws a sentence or phrase from a box and then must write the sentence or phrase with the correct punctuation on the blackboard. (Idea from Teaching Writing Right)

6. Give students a list of subordinate conjunctions and ask them to use the conjunctions in sentences. Go over the sentences for punctuation. Then have the students rewrite the sentences, changing the order of the clauses. Go over the sentences again for punctuation.

7. One method of teaching generalized rules is to involve the whole class in producing a one-page style sheet, modeled on one used by a major newspaper or press association or by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. Focus on the key capitalization and punctuation errors observed in student writing. (Idea from WEDGE)

Improving Rewriting, Editing, and Proofreading

1. Have students form small groups of 5 or 6 students. Have students role-play a roundtable session as editors. Have the group select an editor-in-chief and have all other group members act as assistant editors, each of whom will assume the role of expert for correcting a particular type of error. The teacher becomes the consulting editor if dictionaries, thesauri, stylebooks, grammar texts, or checklists of errors do not answer the students' questions. (Idea from WEDGE)

2. Display prominently on large pieces of construction paper a writing checklist, containing one simple directive in each problem area. For example:

Have I used their, there, and they're correctly in my writing?

there = place
their = belonging to
they're = they are

3. To provide practice in editing and proofreading, give the student two copies of a student paper, one of which the teacher has corrected. The student's job is to proofread - to correct the uncorrected paper by comparing it with the corrected paper. As a later exercise, the student edits and makes corrections without the aid of the corrected paper, and compares with a corrected paper afterwards. (Idea from WEDGE)

4. Devise checklists for students to use to check their own work. Make checklists simple, but use different lists for different types of writing.

Students should check off each point after examining their work. They should make all corrections on their rough drafts. (From the curriculum of Bronxville Elementary School)

a. Does it make sense? Is it interesting?
b. Does it have an introduction?
c. Does it have a conclusion?
d. Did I always use the most appropriate or interesting words?
e. Did I use any words too often (and, then, so)?
f. Do all sentences in a paragraph relate to one idea?
g. Are my sentences varied in length, pattern and beginnings?
h. Do the sentences tell a complete thought?
i. Are capitals used where necessary?
j. Did I use apostrophes, commas, quotation marks, periods, question marks where needed?
k. Are all words spelled correctly?
l. Are paragraphs indented?

5. It may be helpful to make a chart or poster like the following:

REWRITE

R	Read work orally to self and/or others.
E	Examine/Evaluate content and form of work.
W	Write revision.
R	Read rewritten work.
I	Inspect for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting.
T	Take to teacher.
E	Evaluate final work.

6. To make revision more interesting for students you might ask them to:

a. Rewrite the paper without using any form of "to be."

b. Eliminate as many words as possible without sacrificing meaning.

c. Expand each sentence to make it as long as possible.

d. Rewrite someone else's composition for a different audience.

7. Write with the students during the class period; let them see you revising and rewriting. Share your work with the students.

The chart below may be helpful to students in proofreading papers written by their peers. Each student editor would be responsible for one section; e.g., spelling or punctuation or paragraphing.

PROOFREADING TECHNIQUES

Proofreading by Consultants and/or Advisors

1. Consultant: ____________________ COMPLETE SENTENCES

Comments:

____

2. Consultant: ____________________ PARAGRAPHS

Comments:

____

3. Consultant: ____________________ SPELLING

Comments:

____

4. Consultant: ____________________ INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION

Comments:

____

5. Consultant: ____________________ PUNCTUATION

Comments:

____

6. Consultant: ____________________ CAPITALIZATION

Comments:

____

7. Consultant: ____________________ REPEATING WORDS, BEGINNING OF SENTENCES

Comments:

____

8. Consultant: ____________________ USING VIVID WORDS - SLOTTING

Comments:

____

(This chart is from the curriculum of Bronxville Elementary School.)

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PAPERS

There are many methods of evaluating writing and increasing reliability in evaluation. (See bibliography section on p. 78.) It cannot be emphasized too strongly, however, that evaluation of writing should be done using student writing samples, and should not be done on the basis of a multiple-choice test.

As indicated elsewhere in this publication, it is essential that folders of student writing be kept. These folders may serve in the evaluation of the program as well as in the evaluation of an individual student's writing. To improve students' perceptions of their progress, it is a good idea to attach a checklist to the inside of the cover, indicating what the student can do (not what he or she can't do).

Holistic scoring, as required on both the Preliminary Competency Test in Writing and the Regents Competency Test in Writing, is a good way to get through a great number of papers in a short time. This method of scoring is as reliable as any other method of scoring. However, holistic scoring is helpful only to the teacher, not to the student. Analyses of student writing samples according to the instruments beginning on p. 13 are much more helpful to the student, although time-consuming for the teacher.

There are, however, other methods of evaluating student papers. The suggestions that follow come from teachers and are meant to help reduce the paper load that results when a conscientious teacher is teaching composition. The suggestions are meant to be helpful to students as well.

1. Use many short assignments instead of a few long assignments. Especially with poor writers, but often with good student writers as well, long writing assignments encourage bad writing on the part of the student, who just concentrates on filling up the space.

2. Have students hand in the rough draft as well as the final copy. This practice helps the teacher to discover how much rewriting went on, and where the student went wrong in writing. Conferences with the student in which the two drafts are compared often help bring about improvement.

3. At times, correct a set of papers for one concept you have taught, rather than for every possible fault. This method not only saves time for the teacher, but also enables the student to concentrate on improving one or two aspects at a time instead of giving up as hopeless the whole idea of improvement.

4. On some occasions, mark a specific type of error through half the paper, then require the student to go through the rest of the paper to find and correct similar errors.

5. It may be good motivation, as well as a good self-evaluation practice, to allow students to choose a few of the best pieces from their writing folders to be entered for their composition grades for the quarter or the semester.

6. Pair students to write one composition between them. On one assignment, one is primarily responsible, but gets suggestions, proofing, etc. from the other. On the next assignment, responsibilities are reversed. Both students get the same grade. Of course, pairing needs to be done carefully for obvious reasons, but it is a way of using peer teaching, encouraging revision, and cutting down on teacher load.

7. Groups of students may act as an editorial panel to select the best papers of an assignment to be duplicated for the entire class. Give the panel the privilege of suggesting revisions to the authors, just as real editors do.

8. A brief checklist for the student to use before he or she hands in the paper encourages self-evaluation and revision. For example, the checklist could include:

I have kept in mind the person or persons for whom this paper is written.

I have looked in the dictionary to check the spelling of words I was not sure of.

9. To encourage the idea that papers should be revised before being handed in for evaluation, have the students do their rough drafts and revisions on regular notebook paper, but put their final copy on a ditto sheet. Provide a copy of the ditto sheet to each student in the class. (From the curriculum of Ramapo Central School District)

a. Students share in the evaluation and grading process.

b. The audience increases from just one (the teacher) to the whole class.

c. The difficulty of making corrections on a ditto sheet forces the student to rough draft and revise carefully before putting final copy on such a sheet. The student becomes conscious of the mechanics of his or her work, developing a sense of pride in neatness and perfection.

d. Each student has, in booklet form, a copy of each theme by each member of the class, as well as the evaluation comments and corrections.

e. Students see how other students write and think. This helps them gain a wider and more realistic perspective about their own writing.

f. The booklets may be read by parents to gain a more understanding viewpoint about what their child and other children are doing in this class.

g. English teachers could exchange booklets and compare grades on sample compositions. This method will contribute to greater uniformity in marking procedures within a department.

h. Ultimately, students will develop more proficiency in correcting papers themselves. They will learn to understand the procedure of grading as well as to develop skills in revising, proofreading and editing.

Assumptions About Evaluation

It may be helpful for the teacher to keep certain assumptions in mind as he or she evaluates student writing. (Ideas from Joyce Steward, NCTE Workshop, San Diego, 1975)

1. Evaluation is not the same as giving a grade.
2. Evaluation is part of the process of writing.
3. Evaluation should lead to action for both student and teacher.
4. Evaluation should get at the heart of the matter, not just superficials.
5. Good evaluation is evidence of a sincere concern for the student.

Some Helpful Ideas for Peer or Group Evaluation

Students can help each other considerably by working in groups. They must be carefully trained, however, in order to make group work a success. The teacher needs to set limits, to tell them what to look for, to teach them to make comments helpful to each other.

Sometimes the group work can be made less routine by occasionally suggesting a special way of looking at papers and writing comments. Students might be required to respond, either orally or in writing, to questions such as the following:

1. Who would you mail this letter to, if you could mail it to anyone in the world? Why?

2. What kinds of pictures should be included on a collage which represents the main idea of this writing? Why?

3. Using this writing as the ONLY scrap of evidence about the author, write an epitaph for her or his tombstone. Why did you write what you did?

4. If this writing were a pill, what effect would it have on your mind and body? Why?

(Questions from Niagara Falls Curriculum in Writing)

WRITING, THE COMPLETE PROCESS, THROUGH THE USE OF THE PEER CONFERRING TECHNIQUE

Don Chisamore
Vassar Road Elementary School

When we ask students to write on a topic and hand in their creations immediately after the first writing, we make it impossible for them to write effectively and creatively. The student writes for an audience of one, the teacher, and writes without going through the necessary composing stages.

Inherent in writing for the teacher are two problems, intimidation and misdirected focus. The student, an inexperienced writer, must create for a person who has had much more schooling, who has read stories written by many great writers, and who will be the sole judge of the quality of his/her work. In an effort to please the teacher, the student rejects the topic which is really interesting and important to him/her, the topic about which he/she is knowledgeable, and instead picks a topic which he/she believes will interest the teacher. The resulting paper is likely to be weak, superficial, and dull.

If a student is required to neglect the initial stages of the composing process, ineffective writing will result. Provision must be made for time and guidance to allow the student to proceed through all three writing stages. These stages may be identified as three distinct processes. The first stage, the Prewriting Stage, is a meditating, jotting down, rudimentary ideas phase. It is unusual for a person to be able to write something worthwhile without perceiving some sort of insight or mental picture of that which he/she wants to write. It is important to write these ideas randomly at first so that they can be sequenced, classified, and put into sharp focus at a later time.

The second stage is the Writing Stage. Here the writer takes the information from his/her prewriting and tries to communicate these ideas to an audience. It is important that some feedback from a reader or listener be given during this stage as an aid to editing, revising, and rewriting.

The final stage is the polishing, or Editing Stage. During this phase the writer perfects the communication so that it tells the audience, in the best form the writer can manage, what the writer wants the audience to know.

One solution to this dilemma is the Peer Conferring Technique. The purpose of the Peer Conferring Technique is to achieve the following:

1. To provide for the student the time and guidance to proceed through all three writing stages.
2. To provide a broader audience than solely the teacher; the child would write for his/her peers as well as the teacher.
3. To provide an environment where the author will receive praise for those parts of his/her writing which communicate well, and constructive suggestions for improving those parts which communicate ineffectively.
4. To give the writer an opportunity to use or refuse the suggestions made in the conferring group. To have the writer make the decision after peer feedback about the finality of his/her creation.

In order to provide the conferring group experience, the following procedures are suggested. Each teacher will need to adapt and build upon these procedures to meet the needs of his/her class.

1. Divide your class into groups of three or four students each. Try to make your groups heterogeneous; poorer writers can furnish insights about those parts of the writing which are not clear as well as better writers.

2. The writing topic is then assigned. Time should be provided so that the writers are allowed to think about what they want to say about the topic.

   (Provide composition paper of three different colors for the three writing stages which will follow, each color signifying a particular step in the composing process. Ditto paper comes in a variety of colors; lines may be drawn on the ditto master and a large supply of color composition paper may be made available.)

3. The student attempts the first writing. Perhaps we might use pink composition paper to signify the prewriting activity. When the student is working on pink composition paper, the writer is telling the group that he/she is working on writing thoughts, crossing out, and being unconcerned about spelling, complete sentences, or grammar. The writing on pink paper is unpolished and unedited, and not ready for the conferring group.

4. The writer revises and corrects the first draft and rewrites on a different color composition paper, e.g., green, which signifies the writing stage. One rewriting may be insufficient for each writer, so provide plenty of paper for revision. The writer attempts to perfect the paper as much as possible before bringing the paper to the conferring group.

5. Once the paper has been written and the writer feels that it is ready to be read by the conferring group, the group is called together. The writer reads the piece to the group. During the first reading, the group listens to get the flavor of the piece. During the second reading, using Elbow's technique of "pointing," the students listen for and write down those words or phrases which are strong, which carry the story. (Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers, New York, 1973). After the writer finishes the reading, the group reads the words from their lists in round-robin fashion in order, while the author listens. Particularly strong words will be repeated by all the members of the group. Now the writer should have the feeling of some kind of communication. If he/she has written a sad piece, those words and phrases which denote sadness should be reflected in the lists read by the group.

6. The writer may now decide to revise the work, or he/she may pass the paper to the group for a reading. Providing copies for all the students in the conferring group is a problem for many schools, since use of the copying machine is frequently restricted. Having the members of the group read the paper individually and pass it on to the next person is also effective, although somewhat more time consuming. If all the people in the group are at the reading stage in their writing, which frequently happens, no time is lost since everyone is reading a paper at the same time.

What the readers look for really depends on what you, the teacher, want to emphasize. Perhaps you are stressing organization, paragraphing, and description; you might want each child to have a brief guide sheet concentrating on those skills. Using the guide sheet, the reader checks off, makes suggestions in writing, and passes it back to the writer. The guide sheet might have questions such as, "Does this person use a variety of words in his/her sentences to make the written product interesting and colorful? If not, work together to improve the variety of the word selection."

The writer is free to accept or not accept the suggestions made by the group; however, feedback has been made by the group to give the writer information for further revision.

(While the groups are in session, you should visit each group to see if there are areas of common weaknesses for large group instruction, and also, always make yourself available for aid to those individuals or groups which need help. This is where your best teaching takes place.)

7. The student is now ready to write the final copy on regular white composition paper. He/she has had the opportunity to think about what he/she wanted to say. There were opportunities for feedback, and the writer was provided time and guidance needed for revision.

The conferring technique becomes an activity which the students look forward to and enjoy. As the year progresses, the student becomes more aware of audience, becomes more able to evaluate his/her own writing, is more motivated to write, and takes greater interest in proofreading and the craft of writing. This technique thus assures a better attitude toward writing and a better finished product.

BASIC SKILLS IN WRITING

I. Thinking Skills

A. Developing Concepts. The development of the ability to write, as well as the ability to do almost anything, includes development of concepts. Concurrent with this is developing an awareness of the world within oneself. It is important to be consciously aware of one's own emotions and opinions and to be able to express them and the reasons for having them. Also, the uniqueness of the individual is the quality which flavors many kinds of writing. To aid in the development of this awareness and in the ability to write, the teacher may have to devise prewriting activities consciously planned to develop the appropriate concepts in one or more of the following ways:

1. Observing the world around one, using all the senses. Accurate observation is a tool for dealing with the real world and is a skill that can be taught. It is a prerequisite for many kinds of writing, including description, giving directions, explaining a process, and relating an incident.

2. Singling out elements. In concept formation, one must distinguish the essential features of a thing or situation. The same skill is important in writing; for example, in writing definitions, explaining a process, giving logical reasons or relevant evidence for a position.

3. Forming associations. This thing or situation is like or is different from some other thing or situation. An awareness of the concept "square" or "round" might be illustrated by young children in the grouping of objects by squareness and roundness. Adults often explain an idea or object by comparison and contrast.

4. Forming abstractions. This is the ability to consider a quality or an attribute apart from a particular object or instance, for example, "roundness" or "squareness." Most psychologists say this ability cannot be developed until a child is about twelve years old. Therefore, the idea that "Happiness is a warm puppy" is suitable for young children, whereas happiness as a quality may be considered by adolescents.

5. Making generalizations. This is the ability to apply a concept to situations other than the one under which the concept was learned. Obviously, this ability is important for all kinds of activity, not only writing. Students may need help in learning to apply generalizations appropriately to concrete situations.

B. Vocabulary. Inseparable from the development of concepts is the development of a vocabulary sufficient to express the concepts.

II. Organization and Development Skills

A. Definitions

1. Organization is a sequence of written expressions planned to achieve specific results.

        a. Identification of the purpose of, and audience for, the writing

        b. Selection of sequence

    2. Development is the sufficient and appropriate use of details, reasons, examples, facts, anecdotes to produce the intended effect.

B. Skills of Organization and Development

1. Relating events in order of occurrence
2. Arranging steps of a process in logical order
3. Stating a topic sentence and giving supporting details
4. Explaining why and how something happened
5. Defining in context
6. Classifying
7. Generalizing and particularizing
8. Comparing and contrasting
9. Bringing ideas together for coherence
10. Choosing appropriate* mode, format, genre
11. Beginning and concluding appropriately*
12. Choosing appropriate* diction
13. Anticipating possible misunderstandings in order to achieve clarity.
14. Editing and revising
15. Proofreading

*Appropriateness as determined by the purpose of, and the audience for, the writing.

III. Language Skills

A. Spelling

1. Common, nonacademic, useful words
2. Specialized vocabulary of subject areas

B. Capitalization

1. Initial word in sentence
2. Direct quotation
3. Letter form
4. Proper nouns and adjectives
5. Titles

C. Punctuation

   1. End
   2. Possessive
   3. Contraction
   4. Direct Address
   5. Series
   6. Direct Quote
   7. Addresses
   8. Dates
   9. Abbreviations

D. Grammar and Usage

   1. Verb form (brung) - egregious errors
   2. Tense - consistency, accuracy
   3. Pronoun reference - clarity, only
   4. Subject-verb agreement - simple
   5. Double negative
   6. Items impeding clarity

E. Other

   1. Friendly letter form
   2. Business letter form

IV. Handwriting Skills: Writing or printing legibly

REGENTS MANDATE FOR REMEDIATION FOR STUDENTS BELOW THE STATEWIDE REFERENCE POINT

The Regents mandate is contained in Section 103.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education which states:

> ". . . Pupils who score below the designated statewide reference point on one or more of the Preliminary Competency Tests (in Reading and Writing) should be provided appropriate remedial instruction designed to enable them to pass the . . . required Regents Competency Tests by the time they are otherwise qualified to graduate."
>
> ". . . Pupils who fail the Basic Competency Tests in Reading, Writing, or Mathematics shall be provided appropriate remedial instruction designed to enable them to pass the Basic Competency Tests by the time they are otherwise qualified to graduate."
>
> ". . . A pupil who shall be provided remedial instruction, and the parent or guardian of such a pupil, shall be notified in writing by the principal of the test results and the plan for remedial instruction. . . ." The Regents Competency Testing Program; Competency Testing, Remedial Instruction and High School Credentials: Regulations and Procedures. State Education Department, March 1979. Page 3.

The remediation mandate specifically states that students with scores below the statewide reference point must be given specially designed progams to address their needs. The student and his or her parents must be informed of the student's score, its implications, and the school's plan for remediation. In addition, schools are required to maintain individual records for all students requiring this special remedial assistance. The same procedure may be followed for those students who score above the statewide reference point.

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